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AUTHOR Palanki, Ameetha; Burch, Patricia
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ABSTRACT

This report describes the efforts of eight elementary and middle schools in seven states to involve families and communities in ways that have significant impact on students' learning. Through a process called Parent-Teacher Action Research (PTAR), teams of parents and teachers, principals, and facilitators at each school closely examined their own efforts to involve families and communities and took action to improve community partnerships and school involvement programs. The PTAR project used a case study approach to examine the processes and effects of family-community interventions within the eight schools. Overall, the results indicated that the PTAR process helped parents, teachers, and administrators make sense of the goals and strategies they were attempting in their school improvement and partnership ventures to address the needs of the whole child. The process also helped them to solve problems by implementing flexible and responsive policies and programs. Four appendixes provide copies of program goals, handouts, newsletters, forms, questionnaires, and survey results. (Contains 13 references.) (MDM)

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

IN OUR HANDS

A Multi-Site Parent-Teacher Action Research Project

Ameetha Palanki
Patricia Burch

Report No. 30 / July 1995

PS 023508

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Boston University, School of Education
Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston MA 02215 (617) 353-3309 / fax (617) 353-8444

The Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore MD 21218 (410) 516-8800 / fax (410) 516-6370

with research partners at

Michigan State University, College of Education
501 Erickson Hall, East Lansing MI 48824 (517) 355-1734 / fax (517) 353-6393

Temple University
13th and Cecil B. Moore Avenues, Philadelphia PA 19122 (215) 204-1559 / fax (215) 204-5539

Wheelock College
45 Pilgrim Road, Boston MA 02215 (617) 734-5200 / fax (617) 566-7369

Yale University
310 Prospect Street, New Haven CT 06520 (203) 432-9931 / fax (203) 432-9933

ZERO-TO-THREE/NCCIP
Arlington VA 22201 (703) 528-4300 / fax (703) 528-6848

For more information on the work of the Center, contact:
John Hollifield, Dissemination Director
The Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore MD 21218 (410) 516-8800 / fax (410) 516-8890

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Evelyn K. Moore, Executive Director, National Black Child Development Institute, Washington DC

Douglas R. Powell, Child Development and Family Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN

Jonathan Sher, Director, North Carolina REAL Enterprises, Chapel Hill NC

Nora Toney, Teacher, David A. Ellis School, Roxbury MA

Rafael Valdivieso, Vice President, Academy for Educational Development, Washington DC

Robert Witherspoon, Educational Consultant, RaSaun & Associates, Inc., Herndon VA

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IN OUR HANDS
A Multi-Site Parent-Teacher Action Research Project

Ameetha Palanki
Patricia Burch

With a Preface by
Don Davies, Principal Investigator

Report No. 30

July 1995

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The nation's schools must do more to improve the education of all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if families and communities work with children, with each other, and with schools to promote successful students.

The mission of this Center is to conduct research, evaluations, policy analyses, and dissemination to produce new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. A second important goal is to improve the connections between and among these major social institutions.

Two research programs guide the Center's work: the Program on the Early Years of Childhood, covering children aged 0-10 through the elementary grades; and the Program on the Years of Early and Late Adolescence, covering youngsters aged 11-19 through the middle and high school grades.

Research on family, school, and community connections must be conducted to understand more about all children and all families, not just those who are economically and educationally advantaged or already connected to school and community resources. The Center's projects pay particular attention to the diversity of family cultures and backgrounds and to the diversity in family, school, and community practices that support families in helping children succeed across the years of childhood and adolescence. Projects also examine policies at the federal, state, and local levels that produce effective partnerships.

A third program of Institutional Activities includes a wide range of dissemination projects to extend the Center's national leadership. The Center's work will yield new information, practices, and policies to promote partnerships among families, communities, and schools to benefit children's learning.

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the efforts of eight elementary and middle schools to involve families and communities in ways that have significant impact on children's learning. Through a process called Parent-Teacher Action Research, teams of parents and teachers, principals, and facilitators across the country have closely examined their efforts to involve families and communities and have taken action to improve partnerships and their schools.

The Parent-Teacher Action Research Project is based on three key principles — collaboration, research for action, and focus on the connections between policy and practice. A case study approach was used to examine the processes and effects of family-community interventions within the eight schools at seven different sites. The methodology is primarily qualitative and uses two levels of measures of impact — internal and external.

Overall, schools indicated that the parent-teacher action research process helped them to make sense of the goals and strategies they were attempting in their school improvement and partnership ventures to address the needs of the whole child and to solve problems by implementing flexible and responsive policies and programs.

Action Research Team Members and Case Study Authors

Anwatin Middle School

Rachel Ackland
Kim Athenat
Sandra Babcock
Bruce Black
Barb Bratten
Lynda Brown
Olivia Brown
Estella Childs
Nancy Colehour
Mary Michael Connolly
Cheryl Creecy
Vivienne Dye
Denise Embery
Stan Eskierka
Fannie Floyd
Maggie Gergen
Charlotta Gordon
Janet Graham
Jean Hanson
Thelma Hill
Kathy Huettl
Virginia Kelly
Shirley Kobbe
Gretchen Kresl
Stephanie Linden
Jessica Little
Stephanie Lynch
Dawn Mennes
Anita Roberson
Glenda Robertson
Harriet Samuels
Carol Schacht
Erlinda Shotton
Paulette Strom
Kevin Terry
Betty Thomas
Debra A. Woods

Atenville Elementary School

Dottie Adkins, service personnel representative
Darlene Dalton, principal
Cheryl Dingess, teacher
Deborah Dingess, teacher
Darlene Farley, parent
Jacqueline McCann, teacher
Stan Maynard, facilitator
Charles Ramey, teacher
Linajati Ramey, parent

Fairfield Court Elementary School

Virgie Binford
Barbara Giles
Ron Robertson
Margaret Walker

Boxes for Babes Ferguson-Florissant School District

Carol Klass
Donna Bubenik
Clare Eldredge
Jane Kostelc
Karen Hoelkner
Jean Manning
Regina Moncheski
Linda Scarfino
Pat Teich
Marion M. Wilson

Samuel Gompers Fine Arts Option

Dr. Elizabeth Allen
Dr. Blondean Y. Davis

Northeast Middle School

Diana Audley
Patty Beard
Karen Behum
Roberta Behrens
Debra Brown
Dorothy Brown
Stephanie Burrage
Rose Curran
Ann England
Ernest Gonzales
Carol Hipps
Carolyn Johnson
Jacquelyn Jones
Katherine Klingartner
Deborah Lenoir
Larry Lucio
Tracey Moore
Mary Powell
Elena Quinones
Roslyn Rogers
Colleen Ryan
Theresa Shannon
Mary Spindler
Carla Steinbach
Claudette Thompson
Colleen Thompson
Vivian Toney
Lecia Van Amerongen
Charles Young
Kit Young
Linda Young
Mamie Young

Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School

Evelyn Ashby, parent
Lucy Brown, parent
Flo Casper, parent
Ilene Carver, facilitator
LaJaughn Chaplin, parent
Claire Dewey, parent
Samantha Durden, parent
Easter Farley, parent
Mary Greene, parent
Diane Greenidge, parent
Andra Harris, parent
Gail Harris, family outreach chairperson
Dr. William Henderson, principal
Theresa Knight, parent
Dr. Jean Krasnow, IRE
Joanne Maranian, parent
Kim McLeod, parent
Rosalind Montgomery, parent
Gail Ravgaila, parent
Kathy Ryan, parent
Debbie Sarno, parent
Anna Shaw-Baecker, parent
Janet Shea, parent
Allie Sullivan, parent
Cheryl Timmons, parent
Lavertis Williams, parent

Matthew Sherman Elementary School

Rene Nuñez, facilitator
Paula Lopez, parent
Maria Salgado-Garcia, teacher

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Preface

PARENT-TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH: A TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RENEWAL

by Don Davies

Parent-Teacher Action Research in Perspective

The pages which follow report on three years of hard work and thinking by about 150 people in eight schools in seven quite different urban and rural American neighborhoods from Boston to San Diego.

The 150 people working in teams significantly and positively cut across lines of race, ethnicity, gender, age, social status, and education. They represent parents, teachers, administrators, school specialists, students, social service agencies, community organizations, and universities.

What is it that is being described and discussed? The answer is both complex and important.

What was done was a form of research — new knowledge was gained, questions answered, data about social phenomena gathered and analyzed, the impact of interventions measured, hypotheses tested, and new insights arrived at about how family, community, and school partnerships influence children's learning and school change.

What was done was action. The process itself was a change in how the school community did business and made decisions. The results were a wide range of little and big steps — new or revised policies, programs, projects, and procedures. Some of the action produced measurable changes in what children learn and in the attitudes and behaviors of educators and families.

What was done was action research. Research becomes a form of action when it is done, not by the experts, but by people who themselves must act — in this case teams of school-based educators and parents who were seeking to find ways to increase the quality of school experience and results for children (Parker Palmer and Eldon Jacobson. Action-Research: A New Style of Politics and Education. Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1974, p.1).

What was done was politics, even though most of the participants would not use that term and would probably deny that anything about their work was "political." But, it was in fact politics because it was a process characterized by negotiation and compromise, in which decisions were made which influenced how goods, services, and other resources were allocated.

As I have reviewed what was done over three years I have concluded that its greatest significance is political because the work helped to shape a tool for collective social problem solving. Such problem solving has always been an important element in democratic political life. Today I believe that reviving our democratic social problem-solving capacity is critical,, given the pressing and depressing problems we face as a nation.

Parent-Teacher Action Research as Democratic Problem Solving

In our first two years of organized life in the early 1970's, the Institute for Responsive Education began to explore action research as a concept and methodology because we were seeking ways to empower parents, teachers, and other community residents to become effective as agents for educational reform.

Then and now I saw action research as a means to democratic problem solving, a tool that was especially relevant to people in schools and communities seeking to define and cope with complex social and educational problems. Our three-year Parent-Teacher Action Research project has confirmed this possibility.

We have seen in this project that the process is democratic in its essence. Why? It requires collective rather than unilateral action. It demands discussion and negotiation rather than arbitrary decision making. It gives a voice in decisions to those people who are most affected by them. It recognizes and credits competence regardless of educational or social

status. In the process people become equipped with facts and with skills of analysis. These are basic tools of effective democratic citizenship.

The project has also confirmed for me the potential of the process as a tool for social problem solving. Palmer and Jacobson stress the idea that in action research, the disciplines of research are used to cut overwhelming social problems down to a more manageable scale and reduce the often stultifying level of rhetoric which often accompanies discussions of social or educational change. In this project teams of teachers and parents were often able to move from the general and complex rhetoric about collaboration and school reform to define specific problems, gather facts about them, design and try out workable interventions, and examine the results. By and large, they were able to reduce a complex and daunting task into a more manageable one.

I believe that the process that has been tested in this project has much broader application. The participants in our eight sites can and have transferred the knowledge and skills that they have developed in this project to other parts of their civic life. They are also likely to transfer the skills and attitudes developed to the way they deal with children in their classrooms and homes.

That research can become a form of empowerment and action is a powerful point today, when so many are frustrated because of the seeming inability or unwillingness of educators and citizens to act to change schools and, more broadly, to begin to solve the society's problems of poverty, crime, violence, racial and religious tensions, and community disintegration.

Benefits of Action Research

Action research as enacted with varying levels of success in the eight sites in this project can help to create conditions that make it more likely that people will be capable and motivated to address social and educational problems — and to do so in a collective and democratic fashion. From my observations, parent-teacher action research can have the following benefits:

- ***Through parent-teacher action research, parents and teachers realize and act on their common interest in the well-being and academic success of children.***

One of the interesting features of parent-teacher action research as we have observed it played out in this project is that it focuses energy on children's needs. A process that helps parents and teachers meet these needs can help to make their lives and work tangibly easier and more rewarding.

- ***Through parent-teacher action research, people in schools come to understand a problem and develop diagnoses together.***

The procedures of action research, as documented in the eight sites and described in the case studies, produced reasonably clear and adequately compelling diagnoses of the schools' problems — diagnoses that most team members could understand and accept. That the diagnoses were based on facts that had been collectively assembled and analyzed made them more compelling than is the case when an outsider tells teachers and parents what is wrong with them and their school. The cases that follow also make it clear that many of the school teams gained energy from the idea that they were working on questions and problems which were important to them.

- ***Through parent-teacher action research, people in schools learn to build strong working relationships.***

The project shows action research's potential to make more real and practical the concept of collaboration. Collaboration has become a new "flavor of the month" in educational literature, but when attempted it often runs into trouble. It is unexplored territory for most parents, teachers, and school administrators. Action research as we have observed offers good entry into what can seem to be a threatening or even mystical process because it is grounded in good relationships. People talk to and learn to respect each other across the lines of professional preparation and credentials, race, gender, social class, grade levels, and subject matter fields. Learning how to cross such lines is at the heart of good collaboration and good schools.

- ***In the process of action research, people in schools are empowered to sustain action.***

The process itself, according to reports by participants in most of the sites, is empowering. Team members gained information, knowledge, and skills, and saw results. They

empowered each other. As a process which offers the conditions under which collective action is possible and even likely and in which democratic principles are inherent, parent-teacher action research has noteworthy potential as a relatively manageable, low-cost tool for democratic problem solving not only in schools but also in a broad range of civic situations.

No Magic Bullet

In this discussion I have emphasized the potential benefits of action research that our project has illustrated. It is equally important, however, to add some cautions. Parent-teacher action research as we have developed and tested it is not a magic bullet. It is not a cheap and easy one-shot solution to school reform or to settling the controversies and conflicts in schools. This project has demonstrated that it can be an important and useful tool, but it also has shown that it can be very slow and cumbersome (as most democratic processes are!).

The fact that the process is democratic means that it sometimes comes apart because of conflicting interests or personality clashes. The process will sometimes fail or be diverted to achieve the ends of a school administrator or group of parents or teachers rather than schoolwide goals. While parent-teacher action research should not be viewed as an end in itself, I do believe it is a viable tool for making school reform more responsive to the needs of children and families.

I. Introduction

Each week, it seems, a new report is released decrying the breakdown of our nation's families and communities. As the number of children suffering from the consequences of poverty continues to grow, so does the recognition that schools cannot address these problems alone. Families, communities, and schools need to work together to respond to the complex needs of children.

. This report describes the efforts of eight elementary and middle schools to involve families and communities in ways that have a significant impact on children's learning. Through a process called parent-teacher action research, teams of parents and teachers, principals and facilitators across the country have closely examined their efforts to involve families and the community and have taken action to improve partnerships and their schools.

Schools' experiences and findings suggest that parent-teacher action research can be a useful way to involve diverse members of the school community in assessing school community needs, implementing strategies, and assessing the results of school improvement efforts. In the process of setting and working toward school goals, parents, teachers, and others who work with children can begin to develop a common vision of school change. Parent-teacher action research can also produce data that become the substance of advocacy efforts aimed at changing policies from the classroom to the national level. However, the success of both parent-teacher action research and stronger family-school-community partnerships require new forms of support from district, state, and Federal policymakers.

The Parent-Teacher Action Research Project

The Parent-Teacher Action Research Project (PTAR) is a multi-site collaborative action research project being conducted by the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) and the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning (the Center). The eight schools, which are part of the League of Schools Reaching Out, received funds from the Institute of Responsive Education to carry out a family and community involvement project of their own choosing. The eight schools that are a part of this project include: Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools (Minneapolis, MN); Atenville Elementary School (Harts, WV); Fairfield Court Elementary School (Richmond, VA); Ferguson-Florissant School District

(Florissant, MO); Samuel Gompers Fine Arts Option School (Chicago, IL); Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School (Boston, MA); and the Matthew Sherman Elementary School (San Diego, CA).

The work that we have done has produced data that are useful on three fronts:

- To help practitioners and planners understand what kinds of family-school-community collaborations work and for what reasons;
- To help others who want to replicate or adapt approaches and/or understand the difficulties of implementation;
- To provide specific guidance to local, state, and Federal policymakers who want to encourage family-community-school collaboration.

Principles of the Project

The Parent-Teacher Action Research Project is based on three key principles.

A. Collaboration

Family-school-community collaboration is not merely the object of our study. It is a principle which informs how we conduct our research and our relationship with school partners, funders, and other universities. We believe collaboration among families, communities, and schools at the local level is supported by collaboration among other stakeholders who direct and provide funds for local programs,, including universities, Federal and state agencies, and national organizations (Davies, Palanki, and Burch, 1993).

From the outset, we believed that a highly collaborative approach to the study was essential for two reasons: a) an externally imposed study probably would not work and would not reveal many of the important, traditionally "invisible" aspects of the project — for example, how programs are developed, what the barriers are; b) we are ideologically committed to collaboration between parents, teachers, school officials, and university staff in action and research.

The Parent-Teacher Action Research study is collaborative in two important ways. At the school level, it is a collaboration among members of a school community, parents, teachers, and community people who are working together in the design, implementation, and

evaluation of their own parent involvement projects. Secondly, it is a collaboration among the schools and the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) and the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning. Center staff and school-based researchers collaborate in data collection, synthesis, and reporting.

B. Research for Action

As part of the project, each school was required to form an action research team involving parents, teachers, and the principal. Action research is a collaborative outcome-oriented process which involves members of the school community in ongoing program assessment and improvement. Our decision to use action research was informed by organizational ideology and experience. IRE is committed to research which empowers individuals to define their own problems, gather facts, and identify opportunities for action. In action research, parents and teachers, the individuals who are closest to children's needs, work together to increase the effectiveness of partnerships of their own shared design.

IRE is also committed to research which has practical use for practitioners and policymakers in the field. Research on practice traditionally focuses on end-results with little discussion of how programs are actually implemented. We saw action research as a strategy for collecting useful data on obstacles to and enablers of home-school-community partnerships "from the ground up."

Finally, our experience with action research suggested that it could be a valuable intervention for encouraging collaboration between parents and teachers. In a predecessor project (Schools Reaching Out) we had used a teacher action approach with some limited success. Action research proved to be useful as a project intervention to involve teachers. We decided to add to the risk and the potential of the approach by adding parents to the equation. The action research approach is both a means to gather data as well as a model of parent-teacher collaboration to be studied in its own right.

C. Focus on the Connections between Policy and Practice

The study is unique in its concern with the relationship between policies and practices of family-school-community partnership. Our policy focus is based in part on a survey of practices and policies of forty-two of the schools participating in the League of Schools Reaching Out. The survey revealed that the growing number of district, state, and Federal

policies aimed at supporting family and community involvement programs remain disconnected from many school initiatives (Davies, Burch, Johnson, 1992). At the same time, the study underscored the impact of school policy, in particular the role of the principal, on schools' efforts to build home-school-community partnerships.

The present study extends this research through a close-up examination of eight schools' concentrated efforts to build programs with maximum benefits for children and families. Through policy and program analysis, we pinpointed policies and practices which obstruct or advance effective family-school-community partnerships.

Description of the Study

The study, which began in the fall of 1991, focused on four main questions:

1. What are the policies (informal and formal) and practices of school-family-community collaboration in schools which have a stated intent to reach out for such collaboration?

2. How do formal and informal policies influence these strategies and practices and, conversely, how do practices influence policies?

3. How do "reaching out schools" choose and implement their partnership interventions? What factors, barriers, and policies impede and facilitate the implementation of such components? What are the actual costs of these efforts?

4. What are the effects of the strategies and practices that are implemented on educator and family attitudes and behavior and on children's learning?

Design of the Study

The project has two teams for data gathering and analysis: 1) in each school, a parent-teacher action research team aided by a trained on-site facilitator hired by IRE, and 2) Center research staff in Boston.

School-based research teams examined the effects of individual school interventions on children's learning, educator and family attitudes and behavior, and school climate. Center staff complemented the school-based research through cross-site examination of the effects

of policy and practice. This cross-site analysis is based on data collected on site visits, through telephone interviews, and by perusing program and policy documents.

The study used a multimethod, multiperson, multisituation and multivariable matrix in data collection (Smith, 1979). Elements of data collection strategies are described below.

1. Methodology

We used a case study approach to examine the processes and effects of family-community interventions within eight schools at seven different sites. Our methodology is primarily qualitative (see description below). Limited quantitative data have been used to assess changes in behavioral indicators, academic progress, and family involvement in school. The cross-site comparison focuses exclusively on changes in policy and practice.

2. Measuring Effects

The PTAR project has two levels of measures for determining the effects of family-school-community partnerships on families, students, and the school as well as the impact of policy on practice and vice versa: 1) internal measures of impact which look for effects on the functioning of the program and the school; and 2) external measures of impact which look for effects on student intellectual development.

Internal Measures of Impact. The PTAR project has a number of internal measures dependent upon the individual programs in place at each school. The internal measures include:

- *School Climate.* Baseline data collected from all schools on school climate using Home-School Partnership Surveys.

- *Parent Involvement in School.* Measures include increased frequency of participation and better quality of participation (more meaningful participation). Evaluation forms, sign-in sheets, and interviews with families about their involvement in school are all strategies for collecting data on parent involvement.

- *Parent/Teacher/Staff Attitudes.* Changes in parent, teacher, mentor, and home visitor attitudes toward each other and toward the school are measured through interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and journals.

- *Program Development.* The functioning of the program is monitored through program scrapbooks, action research meeting notes, home visitor records, and interviews with program participants.

- *Changes in Policy and Practice.* The project looked for changes where policy and practice intersect in the following areas: 1) Schoolwide Agreement, 2) Structural Changes in the Action Research Team, 3) Schoolwide Participation, 4) Institutionalizing Changes to the Whole School, and 5) Systemic Changes.

External Measures of Impact. The PTAR project has two kinds of external measures focused on students: behavioral indicators and academic progress.

- *Behavioral Indicators.* Behavioral indicators refer to dropout rates, attendance records, retention, expulsion/suspension data, homework completion and in-class behavior. Baseline data for all schools have been collected through School Environment Worksheets. Teachers were also interviewed and asked to keep journals or answer questionnaires on student behavior. Students have also been asked to keep journals and fill out questionnaires about the impact of the program on their attitudes and behavior in school as a result of particular programs. Videotapes of home visits have also been used to document changes in relationships between parents and their children.

- *Academic Progress.* Academic indicators include both traditional (test scores and grades) as well as new sources of data (portfolios and increases in frequency of homework completion).

3. Methods

Observation. School-based and Center researchers have conducted observations of home-based, school-based, and classroom-based activities.

Informal Interview. School-based and/or Center researchers have conducted open-ended interviews with selected parents, parent educators, teachers, students, community members, action research facilitators, program directors, and district and state officials on program planning, implementation, evaluation, broader school reform, and family service.

Focus Group Meeting. Selected school action teams and Center researchers have conducted focus groups separately or combined with parents, teachers, community members,

and students. Notes and recordings of focus groups were used to document program development, implementation, and effects.

Questionnaires, Surveys, and Behavior Assessment Scales.

a. Program Assessment Questionnaires: Selected action research teams have designed their own program assessment questionnaires for program staff and participants to document program development and perceived program effects on child, family, and organizational outcomes.

b. Partnership Surveys: All action research teams administered Home-School Partnership questionnaires (Christensen, Thurlow, and Sinclair, 1991) to a random sample of one or more of the following groups — parents, teachers, students — at the outset of project implementation. Four schools readministered the questionnaire during the final year of the project to assess changes in parent/teacher attitudes and behavior.

c. Mahoney Parent Behavior Rating Scale: The Mahoney Parent Behavioral Rating Scale was developed by Gerald Mahoney (1990) to assist early childhood education programs in identifying parent behaviors which support or inhibit positive parent-child interaction. The scale is like a checklist which parent educators can use on home visits to quickly identify families who might benefit from a program specifically designed to prevent language delay. The scale was used in the Boxes for Babes project (Ferguson-Florissant, MO), where an early childhood home visitor program is in place.

d. Parent Journals: Parents at two sites kept personal diaries to record changes in parent-child interaction.

Record of Student's Academic and Social Development.

a. Test scores: Where applicable, standardized test scores, (e.g., Iowa and CTBS) were used to assess aggregate changes in student achievement relevant to changes in grade level. Where applicable, academic records of children of families participating in the program were used to assess individual changes in student achievement.

b. Portfolios: Two sites (Atenville Elementary School and Sherman Elementary School) documented and assessed changes in academic achievement and social development over time through portfolio assessment. Portfolios include writing records, reading records, "best work," "weakest work," and parent-teacher conference notes.

c. Other indicators: Aggregate pre- and post-quantitative data on student infractions, discipline, and expulsions.

Records of parent involvement in school activities. Selected action research teams used records of parent attendance in school activities to assess changes in aggregate and individualized levels of parent involvement at school.

Communication Records. Selected action research teams kept a variety of records to assess changes in level and content of school-home communication:

a. Home visitor records: Record frequency, content, and follow-up of home visits.
b. Phone tree logs: Record frequency, content, and follow-up of school-home telephone contact.
c. Correspondence: Letters and memoranda sent by schools to families.

4. Sources of Data

The Parent-Teacher Action Research Project includes multiple sources of data. Sources of data fall into four general categories: a) parents and other family members, b) children and youth, c) school and program staff, and d) district and state policymakers. Multiple sources of data provide triangulation within and across sites and include cross-perspectives of home, school, and community.

Parents and other family members. Includes both family members who are directly involved in an intervention as program participants and/or as action research team members.

Children and youth. Includes children who are directly involved (or whose family members) are directly involved in the intervention being studied — e.g., children being mentored and children whose families are being home visited.

School and program staff. Includes school and program staff such as principals and teachers participating in action research teams and/or directly or indirectly involved in the intervention. Program staff includes individuals (paid or unpaid) who are directly responsible for carrying out the intervention, including parent educators (home visitors, family outreachers, etc.), mentors, parent coordinators, and phone tree members.

District and state policymakers. Includes district and state policymakers who administer Federal, state, and local programs — Chapter 1, Even Start, and Special Education administrators; state early childhood program directors; school board members, and superintendents.

Limitations of Study

As stated above, case study methodology was employed in this study to capture the developmental process of building family-school relationships; however, given the uniqueness of each site's program strategies, age groups, and research focus, there is great variability in methods used for data collection and in the structure of the case studies. This variability is perceived by this study as a strength and reflects the particular needs and focus of individual schools; however, there were no valid comparable data collected across sites and each case study should be read as an individual piece.

PARENT-TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT:
CROSS-SITE RESEARCH DESIGN

Site	Intervention	Measures of Impact	Sources of Data
Anwatin/ Northeast	Parent-teacher action planning	School climate Family involvement in school Parent/teacher/staff attitudes	Surveys Program Evaluation Questionnaires Records of parent involvement in school
Atenville	Home visits Phone tree Family center	School climate Family involvement in school Parent/teacher/staff attitudes Student behavioral and academic indicators	Survey Program assessment questionnaires Communication records Student records Records of parent involvement in school
Fairfield Court	Home Visits	School climate Family involvement in school Parent/teacher/staff attitudes Student behavioral and academic indicators	Survey Questionnaire Focus Groups Journals Student records: Portfolios Records of parent involvement in school
Ferguson-Florissant	Home-learning activity Home Visits	Parent-child interaction Language/Communication Development	Behavioral scale Interviews Journals: "Baby Biographies"
Gompers	Mentoring	School climate Parent/teacher/staff attitudes Student behavioral and academic indicators	Surveys Interviews Student Records Questionnaires
O'Hearn	Home Visits	School climate Family involvement in school Parent/teacher/staff attitudes	Surveys Questionnaires Focus groups Records of parent involvement in school
Sherman	Home Visits	School climate Family involvement in school	Surveys Interviews Communication records: Portfolios Student records: Portfolios

II. Seven Case Studies of Parent-Teacher Action Research

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Activities at the School Level

In the first year of the project, participating schools faced common challenges, tested new strategies, and began to document a number of interesting effects.

Action Research is Unfamiliar Territory. In November 1992, principals and facilitators from eight schools met in Boston for a three-day orientation and training conference. The conference laid important groundwork but raised many questions such as "Who should be on the action research team?" "What is actually expected of us?" To add to the challenge there appeared to be plenty of reasons why bringing parents and teachers together as partners in decision-making would not work. Anyone who had participated in previous reforms involving decision-making councils could warn of the challenges which lay ahead. For one, assessing program strengths and weaknesses is unfamiliar territory for schools. Traditionally, this job has been left to outside researchers. Now outside researchers (IRE and the Center) were urging school teams to engage in the questioning process.

Defining Goals and Objectives. Teams responded to the uncharted territory of parent-teacher action research by defining their own specific goals and objectives. Issues raised in meetings and memos focused on the role of the action research team in relationship to other shared decision-making bodies within the school, how to identify indicators of project success, and how to disseminate information on the project schoolwide. School teams responded to these issues in different ways. Some schools determined that the action research team should not be separate from the team of people responsible for the project (e.g., home visitors). They believed that individuals who were actually carrying out the project were in the best position to design and assess its effects. Other schools determined that the role of the action research team should be to coordinate parent involvement projects schoolwide.

Moving Beyond Representation to Meaningful Participation. Defining goals and objectives enabled teams to take a first critical look at their projects. The majority of teams identified the need to increase participation of both teachers and parents in the action research

process. Some teams anticipated challenges of involving parents and teachers in action research. In some cases, teachers met before the project started to discuss their expectations and roles in the project. Other schools identified the need for increased teacher participation once the project was underway. They did this not out of a sense of obligation but because they recognized teachers as critical to the project's impact on children's learning.

Creating New Opportunities for Parent and Teacher Involvement. Teams responded by creating new opportunities for parents and teachers to bring their skills to the action research process. One school offered teachers the responsibility of designing family portfolios to document changes in children that might not be captured in test scores. In other schools, teachers were asked to keep journals to record changes in student behavior. In a few instances, parents took on significant responsibilities within the project such as making presentations about the project at community and regional events. Teams also took steps to eliminate obstacles to parent involvement in the action research process by outlawing the use of educational jargon that can isolate parents from discussion and providing child care and transportation for parents attending meetings.

Moving from Action to Reflection. At the outset of the project, the reflective half of action research seemed a burden to most facilitators and their teams. The demands of beginning a new project left little time for reflection. A number of schools saw red flags when individual team members began to report feeling overwhelmed, when tensions at team meetings rose, and when listening skills deteriorated. Gradually, schools moved toward making critical thinking an integral part of the project. They took simple steps to make reflection easy and useful for their schools. Facilitators took responsibility for compiling notes with wide margins to encourage team members to write their reflections in the margins. Others used information generated about the project, from questionnaires or interviews, to spur reflection on the effectiveness of the program. Some schools formed subgroups to do planning and coordinating so that there would be more meeting time for actual problem-solving.

Ongoing Reflection and Evaluation of Impact. The second and third years of the Parent-Teacher Action Research project consisted of juggling both the daily routine of implementing parent involvement programs and ongoing research and monitoring of the implementation process. Action research teams began their second year re-evaluating their action plans from the first year. Action research teams spent a good portion of their second year collecting data on the process of implementing their parent involvement programs and

thinking about what kinds of data they would need to find out and what effects they were having on children, families, and the school as a whole.

Action research teams were responsible for developing their own data collection strategies given that each school has a different parent involvement program. Staff at the Boston Center office worked with teams to provide ideas, technical assistance, and referrals to other schools in the network that had similar programs. Schools encountered challenges in finding data collection strategies that were not too cumbersome for program staff to use.

Writing Up Results. During spring 1993, action research teams were encouraged to establish school-based writing teams that would take the data collected from the team and write a case study to be published as part of this final report. The writing team was to include one parent, one teacher (or home visitor), the facilitator, and the principal. The writing teams were invited to Boston where they received training and information for writing their case study. Each team left the conference with an outline of their case study. By June, each team had drafted the first half of their case study.

During the third year of the project, teams compiled and analyzed the data about effects and wrote about their results in case studies. Action research teams used a variety of data collection strategies from many different perspectives including the principal, school staff, parents, and community members. (See previous section for more detailed information.) Some schools had difficulty in making a collaborative writing process work given the constraints of time and skill-base. Some schools deferred the writing of the case study to the facilitator or the principal, who then brought a draft of the case study to the team for feedback and changes. Other schools divided the task of writing the case study between different members of the team and pieced the case study together. Still others sought ideas from the team for what should go into the case study and then had one or two people draft the entire case study. All schools, however, were confronted with the challenge of making sure the different perspectives of those involved in the program were captured in the case study. School teams used various strategies for including different voices in their case study. From transcribing interviews to identifying quotes from parents and parent educators to finding blocks of texts from parent journals, school teams had to think about what voices were already being heard, whose voices were missing, and how they were going to include those voices.

Activities at the Center Office in Boston

Our ongoing contact with on-site facilitators revealed a need for better development of data collection strategies and skills and more training in action research.

Orientation Conference. In the beginning of the first year of the project, we hosted an orientation conference for all the schools participating in the project to share what we as an organization had learned about building family-school-community partnerships and to familiarize them with action research. We invited the principal and on-site facilitator from each school to spend two days in workshops on the goals of the project. They were each given an action research handbook which provided a basic outline of the kinds of information schools should begin to think about compiling, some general readings on the subject, and resources that schools can access to get more information. In addition to the conference, each school was assigned a staff member from IRE and the Center who would be their primary contact for the study. The orientation conference provided an opportunity for schools to hear from each other about their experiences and plans for establishing new and different partnerships with the families in their community.

Technical assistance to develop data collection strategies and skills. As action research teams reflected on their research action plans, team members voiced concern for developing data collection strategies that would not intrude on or impede the daily routine of implementing their parent involvement programs.

To address the issue of developing better data collection strategies, we decided to use time on site visits to offer customized technical assistance, given that each school program was unique and required more intensive attention. Schools faced a number of problems: how to involve teachers in collecting data without overburdening them, how to refine recordkeeping of home visits to reduce the amount of time being spent on paperwork rather than on actual home visits, and how to involve parents in keeping records of their own progress without breaching issues of confidentiality. Each site developed its own means for addressing these common problems: some schools had teachers keep journals, others had teachers fill out short questionnaires at key points in the program. Home visiting logs and records were shortened to a few key questions that reduced the paperwork to one page. Parents were asked to decide what pieces of information they wished to share with a larger audience or were interviewed with their names withheld to protect their privacy.

Ongoing training of teams in collaborative writing. In addition to on-site technical assistance, we found that team members' knowledge base and skill-levels relating to action research were uneven across schools. In the first year, we decided that the final product for the study should be practitioner-friendly and incorporate the voices of program implementers and participants as much as possible. To achieve this, we found that case studies would better capture the process of implementing a parent involvement program from the point of view of the practitioner. To further achieve this goal, we decided that the action research teams were in a better position to draft these case studies and encouraged action research teams to appoint or elect a smaller writing team to become the authors of their case study. We believed that multiple perspectives could be better captured by requiring members from different roles to participate on the writing team.

The task of inviting a group of school folks not accustomed to documenting and writing a case study appeared daunting at first. Given the differences in the roles of team members, in educational background, and in knowledge and perspectives on the program, we realized that all the school writing teams would need some kind of common foundation and skills to avoid having certain members of the team with writing or research skills dominating the process. Thus, it was decided that a training conference for writing teams would be needed during the second year.

In early March 1993, a four-day training conference was held in Boston for all the school's writing teams. The conference started with a "bring-and-brag" session which enabled team members to talk at length about a particular aspect of their program that was successful and that would help give the other participants a picture of what their programs looked like. The next day was full of workshops focused on identifying all the different perspectives and experiences their program needed to capture and what kinds of strategies team members could use to incorporate these differing perspectives into their case study. The following day team members attended a workshop on multiple strategies for writing case studies and building on the strengths of different members who may not find writing to be their best skill. Finally, the team members drafted an outline of their case study based on general guidelines developed by us.

Reporting Activities

Our action research project recognizes the shared expertise of all parties involved in designing, implementing, and evaluating parent-community-school partnerships. As partners in the business of student success, it only makes sense that all aspects of the project should be shared, including reporting activities. If we were to make presentations at conferences or write articles for publications without our school-based colleagues, we would only be able to relate part of the story.

Presentations at Conferences. Each school team was invited to participate in one kind of public forum or another to publicize their programs. In November 1992, the Anwatin Middle School, the Gompers Fine Arts Option School, and the Northeast Middle School were asked to present at two sessions on parent involvement in middle schools for the National Middle Schools Association annual conference. The sessions were well attended and praised for their obviously strong and successful efforts to involve families in middle grades. The schools provided conference participants with strategies and evidence on the effectiveness of involving parents for student success.

Many of the schools participated in national conferences in Washington, DC. In April 1993, the Patrick O'Hearn School conducted a workshop for the annual conference of the Association for Supervision, Curriculum, and Development on their family outreachers program and the significant impact they have had on increasing parent involvement in their school. Similarly, the Boxes for Babes program and Fairfield Court Elementary School served on a panel for the Head Start Parent Involvement Conference in August 1993 about the multiple roles parents can play in home visiting programs. In July 1993, the Sherman Elementary School participated on a panel for the National Coalition of Education Activists to talk about the empowerment of parents as advocates for their children. Finally, in January 1994, the Center on Families sponsored a policy forum for Federal policymakers on this project.

Sherman Elementary School also joined Atenville Elementary School in 1993 for the annual American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference as well as the International Roundtable (a forum organized by the Center for its International Network of Scholars). Both schools presented on the process of action research and its impact on school policy and beyond. For example, Atenville talked about how action research provided the school with the evidence that parent involvement works in order to stop the district from

restructuring the school from a K-6 to a K-3. Impressed with the research, the school board overturned the policy and allowed the school to maintain its current structure.

In October 1992, the IRE and the Center sponsored a national videoconference in which all eight schools participated. The videoconference provided time for two action research teams in particular to develop and focus their action plans more fully for the year.

Publications. In addition to conferences, the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project has been reported through written formats. In Spring 1993, the action research teams were asked to write a brief article about their program and the action research process which was published in a special issue of *Equity and Choice* on parent-teacher action research. Center staff (Patricia Burch and Ameetha Palanki) were asked to be guest editors of this special issue.

School teams each took a different approach to collaborative writing for their articles for this report. Some schools used their smaller writing team as a forum for discussing what should go into the article. Each member of the writing team wrote a section on what the challenges of action research have been for them and some strategies for working through the obstacles. Other schools identified one or two people to write the article and circulate a draft to other members of the action research team for comments and feedback. In some schools, the principal or the facilitator wrote the article with little or no feedback from the action research team because they either felt uncomfortable with the collaborative writing process or were constrained by time and could not get the feedback from the team in time.

As the articles came in, we reviewed and edited them for length and clarity. We then contacted facilitators with our changes to get their consent. We also invited four outside reviewers (Ann Lieberman, Mon Cochran, Anne Wheelock, and Norm Fruchter) to provide the historical context of action research and how our project fits in the field, to take a critical look at whether our approach to action research empowers families, and to discuss how research coupled with advocacy strengthens the integrity of advocacy and sharpens the applicability of research.

In addition, the project has been written up in a number of publications. The entire action research project has been publicized in articles by Center staff for *School Community Journal, The Journal for Emotional and Behavioral Problems, Whole Child, Whole Community*, and the recently published anthology, *Parental Involvement in Education* (1993).

SCHOOLS AND THEIR PROJECTS AT A GLANCE

Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools are located in Minneapolis, MN. Each school has an approximate enrollment of 800 students. Under a joint project initiated by Minneapolis Public School Staff and the University of Minnesota, both schools created a team of parents and teachers called PATHS (Parents And Teachers Headed for Success) to develop and evaluate new strategies for encouraging student success. Both schools focused on improving home-school communication by installing answering machines and telephones in classrooms. They also increased parent presence within the school through a parent visitor/guest lecturer program and a parent worker program. In addition to these initiatives, Northeast Middle School initiated the interactive homework program, TIPS, to promote parent participation in homework.

Atenville Elementary School is located in the foothills of Appalachia and has an enrollment of approximately 209 students. One goal of the Parents as Educational Partners Program has been to improve communication between families and the school. The school has reached out to the least connected parents through a church-based parent center, a parent-to-parent phone chain, and home visits. The school believes that improving communication between home and school can have direct benefits for students. The seven member action research team took a close look at how the program has helped students and families by compiling portfolios on children's progress and their family involvement.

Fairfield Court Elementary School is located in Richmond, Virginia in the middle of two low-income housing projects inhabited by mostly single-parent families. Approximately 530 students (preschool-grade 5) are enrolled in the school. Under a three year grant from the Plan for Social Excellence, the school has crafted a comprehensive child development program for children—preschool through grade 2. A team of home visitors (known as parent educators) has visited parents twice a month, worked with them on home-learning activities, connected them with community resources, and served as classroom tutors one day a week. The school has been interested in gaining parents' perspectives on the program's impact. Close to forty parents kept journals on their work with parent educators and its effects on their children.

Ferguson-Florissant School District (Missouri) initiated a program called Boxes for Babes for families with infants age 10-24 months. The program is an off-shoot of the Parents as Teachers program, a nationally recognized early childhood and parent education model. Overall, 140 families have participated in the Boxes for Babes program. A team of parent educators work with parents on activity boxes which contain different toys and materials that parents can use with their children. The seven parent educators made up the action research team. Using a prepared behavioral scale, the team looked at the effects which the Boxes for Babes activity has had on parents' interactions with their children.

The Samuel Gompers Fine Arts Option School serves approximately 547 children in fourth through eighth grade. Located in southside Chicago, the school introduced a male mentoring program in the fall of 1991. A core team of fourteen mentors recruited from the community are spending a minimum of three hours a week working with students in and outside of classrooms. The goal of the program has been to provide students with male and female role models in order to help students increase their self-esteem and academic success. The action research team is helping mentors took a close look at the effectiveness of particular strategies, e.g. one-on-one tutoring, group work, and home visits.

The Patrick O'Hearn School is located in a racially and economically mixed neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. It has 215 students. The school became a special integration model school in 1989. Children with severe disabilities from pre-schoolers to grade 4 and regular education children learn together in the same classroom. The school's home visitor project is one part of a series of programs designed to build parent involvement at the school. The home visitor team consists of parent volunteers who meet monthly to solve problems. Among other things, the school has been looking at the impact of the home visits on the achievement of children in kindergarten and first grade. The Family Outreachers (as the home visitors are called) have taken leadership over parts of the school's parent involvement program, e.g., drafting the parent involvement component of the school's improvement plan.

The Matthew Sherman Elementary School (San Diego, CA) serves over 1,220 students of which 85 percent are Spanish speaking. Bilingual parents were recruited as home visitors to build a communication bridge between home and school. The Sherman's action research team includes parents and teachers of students in the third grade. The team decided to focus on the third grade, because that is the first transitional grade into English-only classes and an important turning point in determining whether bilingual students will stay in school in later grades.

Parents and Teachers Headed for Success: Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools

Prepared by:
Shui Fong Lam and Mary F. Sinclair
University of Minnesota

In December 1991, two teams of parents and teachers were formed at Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools of the Minneapolis Public Schools. They were formed in an effort to collaboratively develop strategies to improve the education for youth at these two schools. Through the process of action-research, the two teams have been planning, implementing and evaluating various strategies to improve home-school collaboration. The members of the two teams refer to their efforts as the PATHS project - Parents and Teachers Heading for Success. Each PATHS team has consisted of five to six teachers and eight to ten parents. The primary role of the school principals has been to provide support for the implementation of the action plans developed by the teachers and parents. Project staff of a dropout prevention and intervention research project (called the Partnership for School Success) located in both of the middle schools have served as facilitators on the PATHS teams.

The Research Issues

Among a long list of concerns generated by the PATHS teams (see Appendix A.1.), both groups independently chose the need for better communication between home and school as their primary action research goal. Several communication barriers were identified and discussed frequently among the team members. One barrier relates to the increase in the number of school staff a parent must interact with at the secondary school level in order to be knowledgeable about their child's progress and the tendency for that first contact between parents and teachers to be negative. A second obstacle to communication involves the high mobility of students, families, and school staff in urban school districts. Yet another challenge discussed by the teams is the tendency of adolescents to interfere with parent-teacher efforts to exchange information. And finally a fourth barrier noted by the teams has been the limited access teachers have to telephones in their work place. The PATHS teams at Anwatin and Northeast middle schools have found that these factors in particular make communication between home and school an ongoing struggle.

For example, one means for schools to share information with parents is through the mail. However, the task of maintaining current address lists is complicated by constant family mobility. Mobility and economic circumstances also render about 25% of the students' families unreachable by telephone at any given time. Efforts to save money on postage by sending notices via students is often minimized by adolescents' reluctance to pass on the information. Another common frustration occurs when parents want to check on their child's progress, but no one person is able to serve as a source of information as was the case in elementary school.

The Context

When the PATHS project began, both Anwatin and Northeast were in early phases of restructuring as part of a district-level initiative, from a high school-like model into a middle school model designed to be more sensitive to students' developmental needs. The district's junior high schools, which averaged about 1,000 students, were reorganized into multiple teams within each school. Each team includes approximately 120 students grouped heterogeneously, four subject-area teachers, and one special education teacher. The teams are intended to create small communities within the larger school. One team from each school was recruited to participate in the PATHS project. In conjunction with restructuring efforts, both schools strive to follow "best practices" such as: (1) regularly sending out parent newsletters (see Appendix A.2), (2) mailing out midquarter progress reports, (3) holding open houses supported by their respective business partners in which transportation, dinner, and raffles are provided, and (4) holding parent-teacher conferences during the evenings, on multiple nights, and in multiple locations in order to be more accessible to all parents.

In addition to these school-based initiatives, two other strategies to strengthen home-school interactions were initiated by the Partnership for School Success project in conjunction with the PATHS project action plans. The first of these strategies involved hiring parents of youth with learning or behavioral disabilities to work part-time in the schools. The parents, referred to as Parent Workers, interacted in a complementary fashion with the teachers and provided the motivational and emotional support many youth need in order to be successful in school. For several of the Parent Workers, the job was their first formal employment experience. The second strategy offered family members access to a General Equivalency Degree (GED) preparatory software program, along with the logistical support for the process of actually taking the GED exam. The GED program was intended to expand the

variety of ways in which parents could connect with their child's school. Students, in turn, were able to see parents modeling behaviors that demonstrate a shared value in education and positive parent interactions with the teacher coordinating the GED program.

The Action Plans

The PATHS teams consisted of all the teachers (4-6 teachers) from one school team and eight to ten parents of the 120 students who were part of the school team. Within this evolving context, the PATHS team designed action plans to address their concerns about communication between home and school. Their action plans consisted of the following four components:

- **the homework hotline**
- **interactive homework**
- **a joint curriculum venture**
- **a parent visitor program**

Homework Hotline. Parents had frequently indicated that they are uninformed about their child's homework assignments and are often led to believe that no assignments are given. Thus both teams implemented a homework hotline, which is essentially an answering machine hooked up to designated telephone lines. Parents or students can call in to find out what homework assignments or projects are due for the week (see Appendix A.3). The message is updated regularly by one of the team teachers.

Interactive Homework. The Northeast PATHS team also incorporated the use of interactive homework strategies which they acquired at a workshop led by Joyce Epstein. Various steps and incentives, such as coupons or raffle tickets, are embedded into the homework assignments in a way that draws in the participation of parents or other family members.

Joint Curriculum Venture. A joint curriculum venture also grew out of a concern raised at one of the first Northeast PATHS team meetings. One of the parents was uncomfortable with the knowledge that health class was offered to students only one in two years, which meant that the unit on AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases was not frequently discussed. That parent, in conjunction with a few other team members, drew upon

some community resources and created a sex education lesson that was presented to every social studies class on that team.

Parent Visitors. In the fall of 1992, both teams initiated a "parent visitor" program in which family members were invited to spend some time at school, ranging from an hour to the whole day (see Appendix A.4). Various activities included observing in the classroom, guest lecturing, and assisting in the library or lunch room. Some specific goals of this effort were to demonstrate to youth that their families value education, to provide opportunities for school staff and parents to get to know each other, and to increase the variety of ways in which home-school partnerships can be achieved. As an extension of the parent visitor initiative, Northeast invited all the parents of the PATHS team to attend their school team ceremony in the Winter of 1994 (see Appendix A.5). The ceremony was a community building activity for the students and teachers which the youth prepared for by making masks in art class and drafting a team poem that was read to the parents during the celebration. The ceremony was held during the first three class periods of the day.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The PATHS project was initiated by Minneapolis Public Schools and the University of Minnesota staff of the Partnership for School Success dropout prevention project. One team of parents and teachers were formed at each school, with the Partnership for School Success project staff serving as facilitators on both teams.

Building the Teams

Teachers. The participating team of teachers at Northeast were recruited by the principal, who along with the teachers is an enthusiastic advocate of home-school collaboration. At Anwatin, the teachers of the participating team volunteered for the Partnership for School Success staff. To a certain extent, formation of the teams was facilitated by district-wide restructuring efforts, which transformed the Minneapolis junior high schools into middle schools. The teachers involved in the PATHS project were already beginning to function as teams. They worked together not only on the PATHS project but also in daily school operation.

Parents. The parents of each PATHS team were recruited, by the facilitators and the teachers, from the pool of families whose children were on the same school teams as the teachers. Multiple outreach strategies were used to promote the opportunity for all interested families to be involved, particularly those who have historically been overlooked by conventional communication strategies. Extra attention, via home visits and telephone calls, was given to ensure the participation of families of youth with learning and behavioral disabilities and the parents of other students identified by teachers as being at high risk for school failure. All parents of the two teams were mailed an invitation, with a student incentive built in to return the RSVP slip regardless of whether the invitation was accepted or declined (see Appendix A.6).

Facilitators. The PATHS project meetings were facilitated in part by the three staff members of the Partnership for School Success dropout prevention project. Two of the project staff were from the University of Minnesota and one was from the Minneapolis Public Schools. The role of the facilitator has been to keep the goals of the teams in focus and the momentum of the action plans moving forward. It is important to note for replication purposes that one facilitator would have been sufficient.

Trust Building

The first encounters between parents and teachers of each PATHS team can be characterized as tense, guarded, and somewhat confrontational. Several team members engaged in finger-pointing and blaming during the first meeting. Nonetheless, everyone came back for the second meeting, and the third, and the fourth, and so on. The team members were able to work beyond any initial feelings of frustration and mistrust because they shared a common goal and had a viable opportunity to make a positive contribution to their schools.

Specific measures were also taken by the facilitators at the beginning of the project to diffuse potential feelings of mistrust, to enhance the sense of community among the teams, and to circumvent any barriers related to finances or safety. For one, parents were offered transportation to the meetings, at which child care was provided. Invitations were mailed out to all participants for every meeting and reminder phone calls or notes were made one to three days prior to the scheduled date (see Appendix A.7). In addition, the meetings were held in a community setting during the evenings and over dinner. Furthermore, the role of the parent

and teacher was clearly established from the beginning as an equal partnership in the task of action research and both received a small stipend for their participation in each meeting.

Changes in team members occurred from year to year. The teachers of the Anwatin PATHS team followed the principal when she was transferred to another school prior to the 1992-93 academic year. Furthermore, the students of the original PATHS parents moved on to high school for the 1993-94 academic year. Thus, a new batch of eighth grade parents participated during the last year of the project.

Several strategies were put in place to smooth over these changes. For one, the facilitators asked a few of the original parents whose children had moved on to high school to attend the "first" meeting of the 1993-94 school year in order to legitimize the process for new parents. To alleviate the effects of the Anwatin teacher turnover during the 1992-93 school year, the facilitators met with each of the new teachers prior to their first meeting in order to review the action plan and to share a bit of the team's history. The parents on the Anwatin PATHS team were also open to suggestions on how to improve the action plan.

Developing and Revising the Action Plans

From the very first meetings, the facilitators made it clear that the parents and teachers were in control and would determine together the frequency of the meetings, the list of issues to address, the priority in which to address the list of concerns, the plan of action, and the evaluation plan. This process of self-empowerment was essential in the development of a sense of ownership over the project. One parent member's comment in a short questionnaire was illustrative of this process: "I feel very comfortable with the PATHS group. My input is well taken and our plans are going somewhere."

The teams decided to meet once a month during the first two years of the project. It took the first couple of meetings to identify and prioritize the list of educational concerns. The process of choosing one concern was somewhat challenging. Prioritizing the list involved balancing each member's personal goals with what the group perceived as most important and most realistic to achieve. As noted, both teams chose to examine the task of improving communication between home and school.

In the first year of the project, some of the action plans were short-term. For example, the joint curriculum venture, developed by the Northeast PATHS team, was developed over the first couple of meetings and then implemented in the spring of that same school year. The first-year action plans were shorter term, for the most part, because the team vocalized a high need for immediate action and a strong desire to accomplish something tangible. By consensus, the group was tired of committees that were "all talk and no action." The team wanted to see the results of their monthly efforts before the year was over, and therefore decided upon a shorter-term action plan. While the curriculum unit *per se* was not implemented again after the first year, Northeast did open a mini-clinic through which the same community person who presented the sex education unit became a part-time staff member who was regularly available to the whole school.

In contrast, the action plans in the second year were intentionally more long-term with an aim to institutionalize the effort into the regular school practice. With the first action plan successfully executed, the team felt more comfortable aiming for a more comprehensive, longer-term goal. The teams attempted to turn the homework hotline, interactive homework, and parent visitor programs into an integrative part of school operations. With the additional support of the Anwatin principal and the help of one of the mothers who worked for AT& T, the homework hotline was extended to every team in the school. The expansion increased the use of the homework hotline from 120 families on the PATHS team to all 1,000 families in the entire school. The Northeast principal is also pursuing the feasibility of extending the hotline to every team in his school. It has been encouraging to see the strategies pioneered in the PATHS project have a ripple effect on the broader school community.

Other action plans were tested, but were not maintained over the years primarily for logistical reasons. These action plans included a parent center and a guest lecturer program. Both schools had space designated for a parent center during the first and/or second year of the project. One center contained a small parent library; the other contained a GED preparatory program. The Partnership for School Success project was housed in one of the centers, along with all the special education teachers. However, demands for classroom space superseded the use of the rooms as enrollment figures pushed both schools well over their recommended capacity. But because the concept is still valued, Northeast is in the process of designating some of the mini-clinic space for another parent center. The GED program is currently housed in one of the teacher's classrooms.

The parent-visitor guest lecturer program was well received. For example, the students and teachers who were surveyed about the guest lecturers responded positively to the evaluation questions (see Appendix A.8). The strategy was intended to improve communication between home and school and to enhance the relevance of the curriculum. Essentially, family members of the students on PATHS teams were recruited to teach or co-teach a class. Two grandparents, for example, demonstrated how to cook chicken in home economics and talked about how to watch one's cholesterol intake. One father talked about his job with Pepsi to the English classes. A neighbor shared his life story with the social studies classes, telling of his escape from Ethiopia at age 15 and his journey to the United States, where he is now studying economics. However, the time it took the designated staff person to coordinate these efforts was undermining her ability to fulfill her other job requirements, so the strategy was not implemented the following year.

During the 1993-94 school year, the teams decided to meet once a quarter and focus on maintaining three of the original action plans: the homework hotline, the parent visitor program, and, additionally at Northeast, interactive homework. Anwatin's hotlines had some minor mechanical problems with the answering machines, but these were resolved shortly thereafter. Northeast, however, struggled with a phone system that was already operating at its maximum capacity and a district level backlog of work orders to install new phone lines. Two additional hotlines were eventually installed during the winter quarter. Hotlines for the entire school are still on order. Northeast has also modified the parent visitor program somewhat, as was mentioned previously. Although this team decided to mail the parent visitor flyers, they mainly put their resources into follow-up phone calling for one big event: the team ceremony. Although 15 to 20 parents responded to the parent visitor flyers overall, the team preferred the effect of one big powerful event to the cumulative impact of the parent visitor program.

METHODOLOGY

Efforts to evaluate the impact of the PATHS action plans focused primarily on documenting the extent to which the plans were implemented. Overall, the monthly planning meetings were well attended and six action plans were implemented, four of which were carried out with greater degrees of success. In addition, the teams chose to address two specific questions within the context of the broad evaluation goal:

1. **What was the impact of the various action plans on home-school communication at Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools?**

2. **What were the effective "reaching out" strategies used to involve parents on the PATHS team, as well as in relation to the action plan?**

Data collection was a challenge to the team. The team members are the first to acknowledge that there is a need to document what the teams have done and to evaluate the outcome of the action plans. To measure the effectiveness of the action plans, four survey instruments were administered to teachers, parents, and students at both schools: the Home-School Partnership Survey for teachers, the Home-School Partnership Survey for parents, School Climate surveys, and Students' Perceptions of Support for Learning (see Appendix A.9). However, the teachers and parents both suggested that they witnessed changes not reflected in the four common instruments. More specifically, they commented that the instruments were not a direct enough measure and that the impacts of the action plans were not easily quantified. Thus, after the first year, the teams administered more straight-forward methods of assessments. Short and simple questionnaires were administered to parents, teachers, and students which focused on the effectiveness of specific strategies (homework hotline, parent workers) and the perceived usefulness and impact of these strategies on student behavior and school climate. For example, the PATHS members evaluated their own experience with the action research teams by writing down their expectations at the beginning of the school year. At the end of the school year, the members were requested to look at what they had initially written and examine what expectations were fulfilled, as well as what they believed should have been done but was not.

PROGRAM EFFECTS ON THE SCHOOL

Although teachers frequently commented on positive changes of the students whose parents were involved in the PATHS project, it is difficult to make conclusions about the schoolwide impact of the various action plans of the PATHS teams on the two schools. So many other factors influence the extent to which parents and teachers communicate effectively in an effort to support positive student outcomes. Despite these challenges, the teams identified the following direct effects of the program on the schools:

1. Installation of homework hotlines for both PATHS teams and schoolwide implementation of the hotline for the other Anwatin teams;

2. Actual implementation of the sex education unit for the PATHS team students at Northeast Middle School, which otherwise would not have been taught that school year;

3. Ongoing interactive homework assignments with PATHS team parents;

4. Close to 100 parents visiting the schools through either the parent visitor program or by participation in the Northeast team ceremony;

5. Meaningful home-school partnerships with many families who are typically not reached by traditional school practices; and

6. Presentations and attendance at various conferences over the three years to share experiences of the Northeast and Anwatin Middle School teams.

As discussed above, the PATHS teams in both schools were interested in answering two questions: 1) What was the impact of the various action plans on home-school communication, and 2) What were the effective "reaching out" strategies used to involve parents on the PATHS teams, as well as in relation to the action plans? Responses to these two specific questions are addressed below.

What was the impact of the various action plans on home-school communication at Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools?

Increased avenues of communication. The greatest impact the various action plans have had on home-school communication at the two middle schools has been to increase the variety of avenues through which parents and teachers can communicate. The PATHS project was able to add to and strengthen the schools' strategies for reaching out to parents, which systematically included monthly newsletters, annual open houses, report cards, and semi-annual parent-teacher conferences. For example, the PATHS teams made key information regarding student educational success (i.e. homework) easily and readily accessible to parents and students through the homework hotlines. The PATHS project provided parents and students with the ability to call in at any time to find out about homework assignments and upcoming team and/or school events. Barring any mechanical failures and teachers' ability to keep the messages current, the hotline alleviates a common source of parental frustration: parents are now able to connect with one source of information to obtain the answers to their frequent questions.

Efforts to document the number of times calls were made into the hotline were not successful due to logistical and financial barriers. First, the only option on the answering machine that allowed enough time for a complete weekly update did not count the number of calls as do some machines. Second, the cost of having the telephone company set up a system to count calls was prohibitive.

Positive parent-teacher interactions. Another avenue of home-school communication supported by the PATHS project has been positively structured face-to-face parent-teacher interaction. These strategies included the parent visitor/guest lecturer program and the parent center. As noted before, some of these strategies were difficult to maintain. Nonetheless, all the strategies were able to capitalize on the strengths of parents and to fulfill valuable roles in the educational process of their children. Parents and teachers had an opportunity to interact with each other in a different context and to learn more about each other, creating a stronger base of understanding and mutual respect.

What were the effective "reaching out" strategies used to involve parents on the PATHS team, as well as in relation to the action plans?

Monthly meetings between parents and teachers. Several strategies were effective at reaching out to parents. Many team members reported that the monthly meetings were a delightful experience and responded positively in the evening-feedback evaluations. As described previously, the meetings were held in a community setting and involved mailed invitations, home visits and telephone reminders, transportation, child care, dinner, and a stipend. It is difficult to identify which components of this strategy are essential, given that they are so labor intensive. For example, several of the participants declined the stipend and not everyone required transportation. Yet clearly, these intensive strategies not only reached the parents who typically respond to mailed invitations, but were particularly effective at connecting with parents and family members who traditionally have not been actively involved with school people. The teams were also seriously considering using this meeting format on a more regular basis. One teacher commented that the "PATHS meetings have been much more effective than their current Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings."

The parent visitor program in conjunction with the *parent workers* has been another intensive yet effective outreach strategy. The parent workers and visitors were aware of the importance of their presence in school. As one parent visitor put it succinctly in the evaluation form: "We need to get more parents out to volunteer and show our kids that we

do care about the school and their education." The feedback of the parents who participated in the parent visitor program was overwhelmingly positive. All of them indicated in the evaluation form that they would like to visit again and would recommend what they did to another parent. The principals commented that the presence of parents in the school building was more common, as a function of these two strategies. Parent visibility was further enhanced by the "parent visitor" name badge worn during the visit.

The homework hotline is a less labor-intensive strategy, once the phone lines are installed. As noted, this action plan allowed from 120 to 1,000 parents and students to call in to find out about homework assignments and other upcoming events. In addition, one teacher mentioned that hotlines have been instrumental in reducing student anxiety. For example, one young man was extremely agitated during the morning. Upon talking with the student, the teacher found out that the student's mother had undergone a surgical procedure that morning. The teacher allowed the student to make a quick call home to check up on his mother's status and was immediately relieved to find out she was fine. The young man was able to successfully complete his school day.

PROGRAM EFFECTS ON STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

To assess the impact of PATHS, the homework hotline, the parent visitors/guest lecturers, and the parent workers program, the team used three strategies for collecting data: 1) four surveys on home-school partnerships and school climate for parents, teachers, and students, 2) simple survey questionnaires for students and teachers using the homework hotline, for the parent visitors, and for the parent workers, and 3) open ended questions for PATHS participants. The results are summarized below.

Home-School Partnership Surveys

The Home-School Partnership Surveys were used to assess parents' and teachers' perceptions of their partnership (see Appendix I.H for full results). The survey explored three constructs: collaboration, parent involvement, and trust. The survey respondents included the parent workers and the parents and teachers on the PATHS action research teams. The PATHS teams explored and evaluated ways to improve communication between home and school.

Table 1.0: Home-School Partnership Subscales (Collaboration)

Scale: 1.0 (Strongly Agree) 2.0 (Agree) 3.0 (Disagree) 4.0 (Strongly Disagree)

Collaboration	Teachers-PATHS *mean (s.d.) n*	Parents-PATHS *mean (s.d.) n*	Parent Workers *mean (s.d.) n*
Communication	2.58 (0.46) 5	2.04 (0.62) 14	1.85 (0.35) 11
Decision Making	2.10 (0.55) 5	1.93 (0.70) 15	1.67 (0.35) 11
Goals	2.70 (0.45) 5	2.86 (0.86) 14	2.30 (0.35) 11
Respect	2.20 (0.45) 5	1.67 (0.72) 15	1.59 (0.58) 11
Information	2.00 (1.00) 5	1.34 (0.25) 15	2.09 (0.63) 11

In general, the responses indicated agreement tending to be more positive than negative, although the teachers were somewhat less positive than the parents. One exception to this trend is the subscale "mutually agreed upon goals" in which the parents who participated on the PATHS teams responded more negatively than the teachers. "Information sharing" was perceived by both the parents and teachers involved on the PATHS teams to be the strongest element of collaboration. The parents involved in the parent worker program responded most favorably to the items relating to respect, which may be explained in part by their consistent contact.

Table 1.1: Home-School Partnership Subscales (Parent Involvement)

Scale: 1.0 (Frequently) 2.0 (Sometimes) 3.0 (Rarely) 4.0 (Never)

Parent Involvement	Teachers-PATHS *mean (s.d.) n*	Parents-PATHS *mean (s.d.) n*	Parent Workers *mean (s.d.) n*
Attitudes	2.33 (0.29) 3	1.83 (0.41) 15	1.76 (0.34) 11
Behavior	2.30 (0.84) 5	2.00 (0.56) 13	2.27 (0.64) 11

Parent involvement as presented in Table 1.1 is measured in terms of attitudes and behavior (i.e., current level of involvement). The responses indicate general positive levels of parent involvement both attitudinally and behaviorally. Parent attitudes, however, tend to be a bit more positive than the ratings of their actual behavior.

Table 1.2: Home-School Partnership Subscale (Trust)

Scale: 1.0 (Very Comfortable) 2.0 (Comfortable) 3.0 (Uncomfortable) 4.0 (Very Uncomfortable)

Trust	Teachers-PATHS *mean (s.d.) n*	Parents-PATHS *mean (s.d.) n*	Parent Workers *mean (s.d.) n*
Trust	1.82 (0.67) 5	1.85 (0.45) 14	1.97 (0.70) 11

Trust is measured in terms of parents' and teachers' confidence in one another, as shown in Table 1.2. Again, the overall responses are positive. Parents and teachers involved in these interventions tend to be mutually confident in each other's efforts to be supportive of students' educational experiences.

Simple Survey Questionnaires

The homework hotline, parent visitors, parent workers, and (for Northeast Middle School) the interactive homework program were evaluated through simple survey questionnaires administered to students and teachers. The survey data are summarized in Appendix A.8).

The majority of students reported on the surveys that they liked having other students' parents in the school building, while only a quarter liked having their own parents in the school building. The members of the PATHS teams were not too concerned about the students' negative responses to having their own parents in the building. It was assumed that most adolescents would not want their parents hovering over their shoulder at school. Careful steps were taken to make sure the parent workers were not scheduled to work in the same classes as their children, unless the student requested otherwise.

The student responses to having parents in the school were somewhat consistent with their responses to the questionnaire that focused entirely on parent workers. Again, the students indicated that they generally liked having parent workers in the classroom. However, student responses were mixed regarding the extent to which the parent workers impact student behaviors, such as learning more, completing assignments, being respectful. On these behavioral items, the mean response tended to be neutral (i.e., falling in between agree and disagree). The PATHS team members were somewhat surprised by the results. Based on casual observations, student reactions to the parent workers were generally either

positive or ambivalent, and rarely negative. One hypothesis discussed among team members was that youth who were struggling in the present school environment were responding more to the parent workers than were the students who were experiencing success in the present school environment. It was assumed that the negative or neutral student responses were from the students who would do well in class regardless of the presence of a parent worker. However, no evaluation data were collected at the time that would allow the team to explore this assumption.

The teacher survey evaluating all PATHS activities indicated that teachers also generally liked the parent workers in the school. However, the parent workers were not perceived as making the job of the teacher easier. This perception may be due in part to unclear expectations regarding the role of the parent workers and in part due to cultural/social class differences between parent workers and teachers. During the first year, parent workers were placed in classrooms not only based on teacher request, but also in classes that enrolled a larger number of at-risk youth. During the following year, more time was spent arranging the match between teachers and parents and clarifying the goals and expectations of the parent worker position. The intervention coordinator spent a great deal of time resolving minor conflicts between the teachers and parent workers. Even with these challenges to the effort, the questionnaire that focused entirely on parent workers indicated that teachers believed that the parents had a positive impact on student behaviors.

As for the homework hotline, a large majority of Northeast students surveyed knew that their team had a homework hotline. Only 44% of the Anwatin students surveyed knew they had a homework hotline. Perceived helpfulness of the hotline was mixed (Northeast student responses ranged from 73% to 14% affirmative; Anwatin 35% affirmative). The PATHS team members attributed the mixed reviews to the technical difficulties they experienced setting up and maintaining the hotline. It was assumed that negative responses could be attributed to problems with changes in the phone number, glitches with the answering machines, and outdated messages. Based on students' verbal feedback to the teachers, team members reported that the students and parents liked the hotline when it worked. The negative Anwatin teacher responses to the hotline were puzzling. The principal, in conjunction with PATHS team members, took great care to expand the hotline beyond the PATHS team and to hook up a hotline for every team in the school. The PATHS teachers had not heard much negative responses among the other teachers. Perhaps the same technical difficulties were affecting the other teams or perhaps the teachers felt that the hotline itself was not enough to improve communication between parents and teachers, nor to increase the

homework completion rate. Again, no evaluation data had been collected at the time that would allow the team to explore these alternative hypotheses.

Open-Ended Questionnaires

At the end of the PATHS project, team members were asked to reflect on their initial expectations for the project and discuss how the PATHS meetings met (or did not meet) their expectations. They were asked two open-ended questions:

- **How much has the PATHS project fulfilled your expectations?**
- **Are there some things that should have been done but were not? Are there some expectations that were met?**

In response, parents from the PATHS teams had these things to say about the meetings and the programs they initiated:

- *I am happy to report that my experience with the PATHS project has been positive. I used to think that once the kid leaves elementary grades, parents are not welcome to observe classroom activities. I am sure not the only parent who experiences this. I hope there will be more parents given the same opportunity to experience this unique pleasure.*

- *PATHS was very helpful because I got to know the teachers very well and was comfortable with everybody. As parents, we need the role model for our children. Everything was met. I enjoy the whole team because when there was a problem, I knew I could call them and I gave them my job number and told them feel free to call anytime. To be involved made me feel important because children need to know who cares for them. We are in this together.*

- *I feel that my major concerns have been met. Improve communications between parents and teachers on a positive tone. It is easier to know what my child should be doing through the homework hotline. There is a mechanism in place so that when parents want to visit the school, there is someone to greet them. I have also enjoyed and appreciated having a telephone call to remind me or invite me to the PATHs meeting. Many expectations have been met.*

- *I found the following expectations are met:*

  - *We have worked as a team to help improve communication between parents and teachers.*
  - *We have made progress forward instead of backward to help parents and teachers and children grow.*
  - *I have increased communication between myself and school and my child.*
  - *We have brought parents, teachers, and children in.*
  - *I have more contact with teachers about my child's progress in class.*
  - *I feel very comfortable with the PATHS group. My input is well taken and our plans are going somewhere.*

- *I found the following expectations are met:*

  - *I have expressed my concerns and expectations for my child's development and future success.*
  - *Our plans have been implemented and our kids' school experience is more pleasant and enriching.*
  - *I know my child's teachers better. They communicate any problems or otherwise to me. This helps my child very much because he knows that his teachers care and want the best for him as well as the parents.*

- *I think that the PATHS group had a very positive impact. I think the homework hotline is great and should be continued and expanded to all teams. I feel that inviting parents to visit is also good. I feel that the response would be better if continued. I also feel very proud being involved and being a part of this group. I would highly encourage other parents to join in this fall.*

CONCLUSION

The greatest lesson learned from the action research experience has been a mutual affirmation of the ability of parents, teachers, and community advocates to collaboratively initiate positive changes. The experience seemed to validate the notion that educational reform is not about magic wands and instant solutions, but rather about devoting a little time, persistence, and resources toward a common goal. During the planning meetings, it became clear that the parents and teachers were never short on ideas. The PATHS project provided these key stakeholders with the structure and resources to pool their abilities and knowledge in order to make a difference in their schools.

Many of the challenges encountered within the action research process itself were parallel to the issues that the team chose to confront. For example, the parents on the action research teams attempted to call all 120 families on their teams to invite them to participate in the parent visitor program following a low response rate to the mailed invitations. The parents found that a large percentage of the families had moved, had disconnected phones, or had no phone at all. This experience is typical of communication problems encountered by many school communities. Because of this lack of operational telephone numbers and high mobility among Northeast and Anwatin families, teams needed to increase the variety of communication strategies used by the schools in order to increase the chances of connecting positively with every parent.

The teams also felt it was important to mention that as people working in schools, simple and straight-forward methods of data collection were preferred in an action research paradigm. The teams felt it may not be feasible to quantify every change brought about by action plans, but it was reasonable to get direct feedback from people who are impacted by the action plans.

Overall, the team members have been encouraged by the wealth of ideas and enthusiasm generated by the joint efforts of parents and teachers. The moderate successes have made it clear that school communities could be empowered to make even more consistent, planful, long-term reform if similar mechanisms and incentives were a permanent component of the broader educational system. Nonetheless, it was unanimously agreed that the action-research process is a rewarding step in the right direction.

Atenville Elementary School
Parent Center

Parent Involvement:
Schools, families, and communities
working together for the success of all children

Prepared by the Atenville Action Research Team

DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OF PROGRAM

Description of Program History

The Atenville Project has expanded from a vision of the former principal, Peggy Adkins, to a comprehensive vision of the current principal, Darlene Dalton, and an energetic and enthusiastic action research team. The support services from IRE and the Center provided the initial motivation to expand the limited vision of a parent center to a comprehensive parent involvement that gradually evolved as the action research team. The staff and parents gradually realized that the Atenville Project was becoming something special. The IRE/Center staff representative, Patricia Burch, provided a support link to a network of schools that were dealing with similar frustrations and similar triumphs. The role of IRE was extremely valuable in enabling the Atenville Project to achieve "focus" and direction.

The brief two-year history of the Atenville Project is a story of personal and community growth: parents gradually realizing that they are "true partners" in the education of their children; faculty members understanding that parents can be an asset to the educational climate and should never have been viewed as an interruption; county administrators realizing that decisions should not be made without research data to support educational realignment.

Project Funding

The Atenville Project is currently funded by a combination of funding sources:

1. $10,500 Grant from IRE
2. $5,000 Support from local Chapter 1 Funds
3. $4,000 Award received 1993 Outstanding Elementary program in West Virginia
4. $5,000 Library Assistant Grant, West Virginia Department of Education

Funding sources are utilized for the following costs:

1. Project Facilitator
2. Parent Coordinator
3. Parent Center Library
4. Phone Tree Coordinators (stipend)
5. Research Committee Stipends

Training

The training components for the Atenville Project focused on two aspects:

Research Committee Training

The Action Research Team met at a retreat setting (Twin Falls State Park) prior to initiating the first year of the project. This training was to establish the mission, goals, objectives, and specific research components for the first-year research.

A graduate class initiated by Marshall University for the Action Research Team provided regular training with regard to action research implications for educational situations.

Parents

This training focused on assisting parents in the following areas:

a. How to help your child with homework
b. Preparing parents for phone tree responsibilities
    (1) Courteous speech patterns
    (2) Record keeping for phone-tree families
c. Informing parents on the concept of
    (1) Whole Language
    (2) Portfolio assessment
d. Preparing parent volunteers to act as academic volunteers
    (1) After-school tutoring program
    (2) In-class volunteers for classroom teachers

Key Roles

The key or vital components focused on the following individuals or groups:

Parent Coordinator

The recruitment and selection of the paid parent coordinator, who was a parent volunteer, was a vital first step in the empowerment of parents in the educational arena. The financial commitment to a parent coordinator gave credibility to this position in the perception of the parents and the teaching staff. The financial commitment to this position also gave continuity to a vital ingredient in the empowerment of parents. The person to be selected understood that a personal commitment for a daily schedule and fulfillment of an agreed-upon job description were not to be on "volunteer" basis but on a "professional" basis. This continuity gave a constant leadership presence in the Parent Center that could never take place if "volunteers" were the only participants in this process of educational change.

The parent coordinator's role evolved during the first year of our project. Her role was to organize parent involvement activities, act as a liaison between parents and school staff, and to coordinate parent volunteers including phone tree members, home visitors, and classroom volunteers. Darlene Farley's position of importance became more apparent. Without her professionalism and her candid approach to faculty, staff, parents, and the local Board of Education, the Atenville Project would have been severely handicapped and could never have achieved its level of credibility.

Principal

The principal played a crucial role in taking a vision for parent involvement and expanding the vision to be as comprehensive as the Atenville model has become.

Darlene Dalton has provided creative leadership that enabled her to relate to her staff with a higher degree of professionalism while also relating to the parents and community in terms that were relaxed and not intimidating.

Research Team

The research team became the focal point for any educational change that was initiated by the Atenville Project. Research became a concept that was not held at a distance but embraced as a crucial ingredient when considering educational decisions that impact a school. The research team became the "change agents" for the project because they gradually understood that educational reform should never be initiated based on emotion, convenience, political agendas, or favoritism. The community gained confidence in the research team as the central body of academic change that they could trust and communicate with regarding the education of their children. The research team became a forum where needs of the "village" could be discussed by the "village" and changes would be implemented without prejudice of favoritism.

Project Facilitator

The project facilitator provided the project with an individual who was outside the "village" and could assist the research team in staying focused on the issues facing the project, expanding the number of variables to be monitored for research purposes. The higher education component to the project was crucial because the facilitator was able to bring a different perspective regarding research and also provide additional resources that the project could not access under normal situations.

NARRATIVE OF PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Phone Tree

The phone tree established an immediate and a very personal link between the school and the home. The Atenville Parent Center needed to establish an immediate contact with the parents. The contact was needed to explain the IRE project, obtain initial survey data, and to create "trust" in the Atenville "Family" that this project was not merely a fad or gimmick but was a project that could positively change the educational environment for their children. The phone-tree members played a crucial role in providing a daily link to every family. The phone tree became the vehicle of the "village" to share frustrations, silence rumors, inform parents of calendar events, and listen to the emotional and physical needs of the family.

The phone tree also played a vital role in establishing a positive rapport with families prior to home visits. Without the prior "bonding" established by phone conversations, the home visitors' program would not have been as positive as its current status demonstrates.

The phone tree is an integral tool of our parent program. It provides a direct communication link between the school and the home. Selection and training of these special volunteers are an important aspect of this structure in addition to the volunteers' roles, responsibilities, and data/information collection.

The selection of the phone-tree parent is extremely important. The volunteer must live in the phone-tree attendance area and must be a respected and well-liked individual in the community. In addition, because of the amount of time necessary to call the 20 to 22 families assigned to each phone-tree volunteer, it is preferable that the volunteer be unemployed. Finally, the parent volunteer must be dependable, as contacts must be made on a regular basis.

After the phone-tree volunteers are selected, they are provided training. During this training, the phone-tree parents are taught how to use the proper forms, keep their phone-tree journals, and set up appointments with teachers when necessary. These parents must contact their assigned parents two times a month and must attend the monthly phone-tree meetings to learn of the upcoming monthly calendar and discuss any problems and/or concerns. When parents are contacted, the phone-tree parent must complete the phone-tree journal. These journals include the day and time called in addition to the subject discussed. When completed, the journals are placed in the family portfolio and are used as part of our data

collection. Also, the phone-tree parent may be required to complete a "Family Request" form which is given to the parent coordinator who follows up on this request. Confidentiality is stressed during this training, and the parent volunteers are taught how to be personable on the phone. The phone-tree parents are encouraged to frequent the parent room often in order to help their assigned parents feel more comfortable when they volunteer. Finally, the phone-tree parents are trained in making home visits so that they may assist the parent coordinator when she is visiting the phone-tree parent's assigned families.

The phone-tree has proven to be a very effective means of communication and an extremely effective way of gathering data. Because the phone-tree parent documents when the parents are called and are not at home, the parent coordinator can determine an appropriate time to make home visits. The phone-tree parent can also provide information such as what types of workshops parents would like to have and when to schedule workshops so that most parents can attend. The phone-tree parent is also responsible for informing the school when a family moves or changes their phone number so that uninterrupted communication with the family can continue. Finally, the phone-tree parent can also let the school know of concerns the families may have and/or when home visits may be necessary. In essence, the phone-tree is not only a tool for letting the parents know what events are occurring at school, but also a tool for letting the school know what is occurring at home and in the community.

Guidelines:

a. Call parents once or twice monthly to inform them of events taking place at school and to welcome and invite them to visit school.
b. Attend monthly meetings to discuss next month's calendar, and any problems, questions, or suggestions.
c. Must maintain confidentiality as needed.
d. Must be cordial and able to talk with people.
e. Keep school informed of happenings on each attendance area.
f. Keep school informed of problems of families in each attendance area (health problems, house burning, etc.).
g. Attend school functions representing their attendance areas.

Goals:

a. Improve communication.
b. Increase parent attendance at school events.
c. Increase parent attendance at PTA, etc.
d. Encourage parent involvement.

e. Alert parents if bus is delayed, or school dismisses early. This helps to increase child's safety and decrease parent's anxiety.
f. Welcome parents, especially ones from their attendance areas, so that parents can identify with them and feel more at ease.
g. Community activities.
h. Inform school if parents need transportation or babysitting service to visit school or attend workshop.
I. Tutoring program in the community.
j. 100% home visits over the next three years.

Setting Up A Phone-Tree:

a. Choose attendance areas.
b. Review the parent list to find parents who are:
   -Committed
   -Confidential
   -Respected in the community
   -Representing the school well
   -Articulate
c. Call and ask parents to volunteer.
d. Meet with parent volunteers to discuss:
   -How to talk on the phone
   -Importance of project
   -How to welcome parents to school
   -Keeping telephone log or record
e. Divide the parents and give each a list.
f. Be encouraging to them.

The Home Visitor Program

The home visitor program was a natural progression from the phone-tree concept. The phone-tree committee provided a forum for families to express frustrations about the educational experiences they experienced as a family. The home visit conducted by other parents was a process of putting a "face" to a "voice." The parent coordinator organized and participated in each visit. This process became a training program for other home visitors. The other parents could observe the style and format of the home visit and therefore could begin to gain confidence in their abilities to conduct subsequent visits when the parent coordinator could not be in attendance.

The parent coordinator assumed leadership of this crucial component of the Atenville Project. Home visits are vital to obtaining initial research data that is accurate and to ensuring

adequate numbers of responses to validate any conclusions that we may eventually make regarding the Atenville model.

The Home Visitor program put a personal touch to the communication process that was a natural progression from the phone-tree system. Improved parent-school communication was the central theme for our research, and the sequence of phone-tree communication and home visits provided the person-to-person relationship that the true concept of communication must possess.

Home visits proved to be one of the most impactful components of our "Parents as Educational Partners" program. They provided us a unique opportunity to bridge communication between home and school, helping the school to develop insight into the family and the family to become familiar with the school. They were often the only way to communicate with hard-to-reach parents — those who had no phone and were reluctant to visit the school. We found that these parents, after a home visit, began dropping by or calling the school. Home visits provided a relaxed atmosphere for problem solving and soliciting parents' views on school policies and programs. These views guided us as to the needs of our students and families and provided direction for our programs. Visits were scheduled by the parent coordinator and were conducted by the parent coordinator, teachers, parent volunteers and the principal. They went through a training process before the visits and then accompanied the parent coordinator on 1-2 visits before they became independent teams.

Home visits consisted of a three-phase process. The previsit phase entailed gaining knowledge of the family to be visited so that the team was able to discuss topics of interest to the family (this helped to break the ice). Also, the team members needed to meet briefly to pool their knowledge and determine what to discuss. They had to have knowledge of where the family lived, not only to be prompt, but to determine what type of vehicle they needed to reach the home since many of our families live up hollows, over mountains, and through creeks. The team needed to have the paperwork ready and to have designated who would observe and who would interview.

The next phase was the actual home visit, which lasted approximately 45 minutes. After introductions, the team would begin to establish rapport by discussing family interests, upcoming events, and so on. At this point, the teacher would interact with the family by informing them of current classroom events. All of this was informal and was not designed to discuss problems unless it was the parent's wish. Our goal was to make the visit a positive

experience that built bonds and established a working relationship. We strove to set a tone of mutual respect and consideration because we wanted the family to know that we truly cared about them and their well-being. If necessary, we would set up an appointment for the parent and teacher at school or make another home visit to discuss a problem. The interviewer then reviewed the resource sheet, which listed the services available through the school and community, and completed the survey sheet which asked: How can we help your family? How can we help your child? How can we improve our school? We then invited them to visit the school or call if we could be of assistance.

During the post-visit phase, the team met and discussed the visit or any problems or concerns. If necessary, they would filter the information through the principal, who would guide them if follow up or intervention were necessary. The information that was gathered was then filed in the family portfolio.

When the action research team first began the home visitor program, families were reluctant to see us and thought that we were "checking up on them." We had to show them that we were there because we really cared and wanted their input into school activities and programs. We proved this by developing new programs and reshaping old ones with their ideas and suggestions. We were diligent concerning confidentiality and thereby assured our trastworthiness. Now, it is commonplace to make home visits and parents have even invited us to visit their homes. Students often ask us when we will visit them and we have noticed that the visits seem to build their self-esteem. They appear more confident, open, and trusting after the visit and often come to us with their problems and concerns.

The home visitor program, although relatively new for us, has proven highly effective. We continually shape it to meet our families' needs and strive to keep it a bridge builder between home and school. It is our goal to visit every student's home and our hope to unite the school, family and community so that we can work together to provide our children with the best education possible, and to meet all the needs of our children.

Parent Center

The services provided by the Parent Center are available to every family and child attending Atenville Elementary School. The components of the Parent Center have evolved over the past two years and include the following areas:

1. Phone-tree communications regarding events, services, and emergency communications
2. Tutoring Programs
   a. After school
   b. Summer tutoring
      -Remedial
      -Enrichment
3. Library: enrichment for children and other family members
4. Mobile Health Unit
   Weekly medical services are available to the Atenville community via a mobile health vehicle provided by federal funds. The Parent Center functions as a reception area and a parent volunteer functions as a coordinator for these health services.
5. Miscellaneous
   The Home Visitor program provides insight into the personal needs of each family visited. Various services were provided as a result of home visits: clothing, home repairs, food, heat, and toys.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Atenville was interested in examining the combined effects of its communication network on student learning and behavior, level and quality of school-home communication, and levels of family involvement in school-related activities. While the program reached all the students in the school, the team chose the combined classes of first, second, and third graders as its research sample. It designed a multi-pronged research strategy to measure effects.

Data Collected 1991-92

- *School Profile*
- *Teacher Home School Partnership Survey*
- *Parent Home School Partnership Survey*
- *Student Home School Partnership Survey*
- *Program Assessment Questionnaires Completed by Facilitator and all Action Research Team Members*
- *Parent Coordinator/Project Facilitator Notes on Implementation*

In November 1991, Atenville convened a research team to provide direction for the program and to study the program effects on students' achievement, school-home communication, and family and community involvement. The action research team was

comprised of three professional staff members, two parents, the parent coordinator, and project facilitator. The team has met monthly since December 1991.

From the outset, the team tailored its research plan to meet the unique needs of the school community. The team's decision to administer the common survey instruments in person was an example of its ownership of the project. The team anticipated that administering instruments in person, rather than mailing them out, would help gain in-depth information on families' needs. In addition, the team was concerned that phrasing of questions in absolutes would alienate or confuse parents, e.g., "Name two things which you (families) regularly do which have a positive influence on children's learning." By administering the surveys in person, they hoped to encourage families to respond based on their own experiences and values.

The team used information and notes from the written survey and on-going phone contact with parents to shape the direction of their program. For example, from home visits, the school learned that many families lack adequate transportation to the school. This knowledge encouraged them to establish satellite family centers which are more accessible to families living in distant hollows. The school reports that information from the home visits also has given them clues on how to improve communication with families. The majority of families which were surveyed reported that teacher-initiated contact was infrequent. To address this, the school investigated ways of encouraging teachers to call families more regularly.

Changes in Student Achievement and Behavior

a. Portfolio Assessment
b. Student Scrapbook

The effects on student achievement and behavior were measured through school records and individual portfolio assessment. In the 1992 school year, the school began portfolio assessment for every student in the school. While the actual content varies from student to student, every portfolio includes the following; standardized test scores; attendance records; discipline records; teacher notes on interpersonal skills; and written, audio, or video records of students' work. Teachers were trained in portfolio assessment through an in-service training during the summer of 1992. One of the issues discussed was how to involve students and families in decisions around portfolio content.

Changes in School-Home Communication

a. Common Survey Instruments
b. Program Assessment Questionnaires

Changes in the nature of school-home communication were measured through common survey instruments and program participant questionnaires. Parents and school staff were surveyed during the 1991-92 school year with regards to their perceptions of school climate, their own involvement in children's learning, and perceived levels of involvement of parents and teachers. The surveys revealed that school-initiated communication was too infrequent. In response to this finding, the school increased the level of contact with parents through increases in home visits, telephone contact, and written correspondence.

The program questionnaires developed in the fall of 1992 were completed by home visitors, phone-tree coordinators, and families of the student research sample. The questionnaires record frequency of school-initiated and family-initiated contact, and participants' perceptions of the content of the communication and its influence on school activities or family behavior.

Project Documentation

a. Recordkeeping by Parent Coordinator, Project Facilitator

Both the parent coordinator and project facilitator kept records on program implementation, including records on the selection of home visitors, frequency and content of visit, and on-going support of home visitors. Program participant questionnaires will provide supplementary material on program implementation.

PROGRAM EFFECTS ON SCHOOL

In September 1992, the Atenville Elementary School Family Center was opened. This center would be a space where all individuals who served children could come together in a family atmosphere and could work as a team to meet the needs of the community's youth and their families.

The staff and parents were extremely enthusiastic, and both were looking forward to the benefits which this center would bring to the school. It would provide a space for

volunteer parents to work and would become the center for staff and parent training sessions. It would be a place where teachers and parents could sit down together and share ideas and goals, and it would open the school doors and allow the community access to valuable tools which would increase the quality of life for all involved.

The staff and parents both knew that the "Family Center" would change the school, but neither had any indication of how much! The next two years would be full of exciting and fulfilling happenings, but they would also be troubling times. Traveling new roads and mapping your way as you go may sometimes cause one to make a wrong turn. These turns always try one's patience, just as they certainly did for both the Atenville staff and the parents.

Once the center was opened, a parent coordinator was hired and the "Parents as Educational Partners Program" was well on its way. It would be the coordinator's responsibility along with the principal and staff, to find ways to involve all parents in their child's education. She would be an organizer, planner, and a public relations specialist, but how she was to fulfill these roles was not clearly defined. Atenville had never had a parent coordinator, and the staff and parents were not quite clear as to whether she was a staff member or a parent, or did she serve a dual role? She jumped right in and began recruiting parent volunteers and within two years their numbers increased from sixteen to eighty-eight. They photocopied worksheets and graded papers, did costuming and scenery for school performances, organized dinners and dances, tutored children, ran errands, and did playground and cafeteria duty.

With these tasks came positions which gave parents the "power of influence." Parents were assigned to serve on all school decision-making committees but, most of all, the committee members listened when they spoke. Their voices became important and their input was utilized to improve various school programs.

During the process of increasing parent involvement, parents, who had never before spoken up and voiced their opinions, began using the parent coordinator as their liaison. She brought a feeling of comfort and confidentiality to parents because after all she was one of them. Wasn't she? Well, the staff was still not sure — but the parents were! She began bringing problems which parents had voiced to her to the attention of the action research team, but since the parents had requested confidentiality she never disclosed the identity of the parent — only the problem. This was the first bump in the road to increased parent involvement. Staff members sometimes took a traditional stance of "Whose side is she on?"

It took the principal sitting down together with the staff members and talking through some of these situations to actually help the staff see that "we all want what's best for children, and increased communication can help us reach our goals." It did not matter who had the problem or who caused the problem — what really mattered was that the team needed to find a solution to the problem.

In one incident, brought to the attention of the parent coordinator during a home visit, a parent voiced a concern that when an emergency, such as an electrical power failure, a sudden snowstorm, or a flash flood warning occurred and students were sent home early, many went to empty houses. The parent coordinator shared this concern with the staff and it was decided that she would call the phone-tree parents, and they would then contact other parents to let them know that their children were on their way home, thus, no child had to go to an empty house.

Another incident occurred at the beginning of the 1992-93 school term when teachers began to implement literature-based instruction and began to use the basal reader less and less. The parents became extremely alarmed because they feared that this approach would cause their children to fall behind. The staff had almost made a major mistake! They had not involved parents in the process of changing from the basal reader to the whole language approach. The parents even went so far as to approach the local Board of Education and request that this approach to learning be forbidden in the Lincoln County School District. The parent coordinator was very instrumental in solving this problem. The principal had already met with her and had invited her to accompany the staff to workshops and training sessions, which she had done. She had the same knowledge that the teachers had, so the principal, staff, parent coordinator, and other parents met and formulated a plan which included parent training sessions and site visitations. They came to an agreement that parents could choose between traditional or literature-based instruction if there were both types of classrooms available. Most of the parents, once they had training, decided to keep their children in traditional classrooms. One year later those same parents and many others requested that their children be placed in a classroom where the teacher implemented the whole language approach to learning.

The parent coordinator served as the link that better connects parents and staff. As Genevieve Dingess, an Atenville parent, stated, "She's great! She listens. You take things to her and she helps you work them out."

The "Parents as Educational Partners" project description describes the goals and objectives of the parent and community involvement as follows:

> *to improve parent and school communications, to increase parent attendance at meetings and activities, increase the quality and quantity of parent involvement at home and at school, increase students' level of self-esteem, their average daily attendance, the percentage of students scoring above the 50% percentile on the CTBS tests, decrease the number of discipline referrals, increase the percentage of promotions, decrease parent and student anxiety about school and school events, and improve parenting skills.*

School Policy

Atenville Elementary School's Mission Statement states that the school "shares with the community the responsibility for the education of all students so that they will be prepared to become contributing members of a rapidly changing world."

The school's emphasis on more comprehensive forms of parent involvement is relatively new. Prior to 1989, the school efforts to increase family involvement focused on the recruitment of parent volunteers. The school's earlier efforts to expand "the quality and the quantity of parent involvement" were stymied by the absence of a formal plan and adequate funding. The parents' volunteer efforts resulted in a gradual increase from 2,028 volunteer hours in 1992 to 4,369 volunteer hours in 1994.

The school's emphasis on parent involvement is beginning to influence other aspects of school policy. The school now has a policy which gives teachers a daily in-school planning period. The planning period is made possible through the help of parent volunteers. They are responsible for staffing lunch and recreational periods (under the supervision of staff aides). The school's attempt to give teachers an in-school planning period was stymied in previous years due to limited number of staff.

Atenville's Parents as Educational Partners Program is developing in the context of increased policy emphasis on parent involvement at the school, county, state, and Federal level. The following section will identify a few policy developments which have the potential to influence the program.

County Policy

The school's curriculum and climate have been molded by the decisions that have come forth from Atenville's Action Research Team. A recent experience in Lincoln County, West Virginia best illustrates the potential for changing local/state decision-making policy.

The Lincoln County Board of Education decided to realign the attendance boundaries and reconfigure the academic structure of two elementary schools from a K-6 model to K-3 for Ferrelsburg Elementary and 4-6 for Atenville Elementary. This decision was developed over the 1992-93 academic year.

The Action Research Team presented the data obtained from extensive home visits and observations from how parents were involved in the Atenville Elementary School programs. The data were very specific in showing that the extensive parent support is not developed rapidly but in fact has taken time to nurture. The data show that as parents become more comfortable with the total school environment and staff they become more active in their participation. The action research developed to date had strong implications that if parents were moved to another school at the end of the third grade, the process of "growth" demonstrated by the parents would be diminished as they adjusted to the new school environment and staff. In addition to this concern, the Action Research Team believed that the current participation by parents would be diminished because families would be divided in their efforts to help two schools instead of one school. This scenario would exist because many families would have to make the difficult decision as to which school to "help" since their children would be in two schools (K-3, 4-6) instead of one school (K-6). The Atenville Action Research Team presented a strong argument that the K-6 model permits a longer and more sustained interaction between the school and the home during the crucial K-6 years.

The Lincoln County Board of Education members were impressed by the research and the impact that the Atenville parents were having on the success of their children. They listened and reversed the decision and the two schools were permitted to remain K-6. Emotional and stressful decisions are never easy for any Board of Education, but they can be made less confrontational when action research teams are functioning and compiling data that will permit decisions to be made on strong educational rationale instead of being made on emotional or political considerations.

There appear to be efforts underway to strengthen Lincoln County policies on parent involvement. The Lincoln County Parent Involvement Policy requires that each school organize an active parent-teacher association. In addition, each school advisory council must annually appoint one member to serve on a district-wide county educational advisory council. The county advisory council's role is to make recommendations for the county's improvement plan for educational excellence.

In 1992, Lincoln County developed and adopted a comprehensive policy on "at-risk students." The policy states that "traditional school-home-community relationships must be reconfigured" to pave the way for new forms of "collaboration between families, social service agencies, and communities." Programmatic initiatives encouraged under the policy include a "parent school" for parents grades K-4. The parent school would provide parents with workshops on helping their children at school and at home. Funding to implement the policy is not yet secure. The superintendent has identified Chapter 1 as a possible source of funds for the parent program.

PROGRAM EFFECTS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The action research team conducted questionnaires with parents and with teachers about the portfolio assessment process, school-home communication, and the home-school relationship. For questionnaires used, see Appendices B.2 and B.3.

After School Tutoring. The after school tutoring program has steadily expanded its outreach over the past three years. The important concept that should not go unnoticed is that the program was initially directed by school personnel but the program now is directed and staffed by community members. In the first year of the project, only 21 students participated in the program. In the second year, student participation grew to 50 students and in the third to 62 students.

Library. The Atenville Elementary school library was a major achievement. The school staff had attempted to acquire a library for the children and families for years, but the Family Involvement Project provided the final push that ended with a library that currently contains over $10,000 worth of books for children in K-6 grades.

Educational Aspirations. The children and their families are now experiencing a phenomenal growth in higher expectations regarding successful experiences in the school environment. In 1992, 72% of our students believed that they would graduate from high school and attend college as a definite part of their future. This figure grew to 86% in 1993 and 93% in 1994.

Chapter 1 Remedial Reading Program. The Chapter 1 Remedial Program has historically attempted to assist families in the remediation of reading deficiencies being experienced by their children. The Atenville Family Involvement Program has provided a tremendous increase in communication with their highly vulnerable families. The growth in summer support services provided by Chapter 1 staff to parents increased from 12 to 38 parents as a result of the more intensive communication and trust between parents and teachers growing out of our parent involvement outreach programs.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCE ABOUT ACTION RESEARCH?

At different points during the year, the school has come head to head with some difficult issues of building family and community involvement. The opening of the Family Center was delayed because the school lacked funds to purchase furniture and supplies. As funds became available and program expanded, new problems surfaced. The parent coordinator found herself overburdened with new responsibility and brought this to the attention of the research team. The team addressed the problem by delegating some of her program responsibilities among team members.

The team realized earlier in the year that although home visits may be valuable, they also are time consuming. Homes in rural West Virginia are spread far apart. This meant home visitor teams frequently had to travel long distances. Many of the roads are in poor condition and during the winter months frequently inaccessible. As winter wore on and surveys still weren't completed, the team discussed the problems which they were having in increasing the number of home visits. They decided that while the team approach was time consuming, what was lost in time was made up for in quality and content of information.

Confidentiality of information surfaced as another critical issue. The team felt strongly that any information gathered from home visits and the phone-tree must be kept completely

confidential. This loomed as a major challenge given the size of the community and its reputation for being a place where, in the words of the parent coordinator, "Everybody knows everybody else's business." To help prevent leaks of information, the parent coordinator held special sessions with phone-tree coordinators and home visitors on issues of confidentiality. The project facilitator anticipates issues of confidentiality to resurface around the school's use of portfolio assessment.

As coordinating body for the program, the research committee faced its own dilemmas. Early program activity drew heavily on parent volunteers and on the needs of families. However, parent members felt excluded from participation in team meetings because they couldn't follow the discussion. Consequently, the team decided to make meetings more "family friendly," by outlawing use of technocratic educational jargon which parents might not understand.

The process of change is never easy but the inclusion of parents into the educational arena may be one of the most difficult paradigm shifts that the education community will make in the 90's. The difficulty of establishing teacher/parent teams historically stems from the lack of communication between these two vital components of the educational environment. It is the entrenched paradigm of parent roles and teacher roles that presents the greatest challenge for change. The introduction of the concept of action research and more specifically the introduction of action research teams may be the best forum for this aspect of educational reform.

Historically in Appalachia, parents have seldom been included in education decision making. The Atenville Elementary School family has taken the traditional role or view of parent involvement far beyond mere "token" inclusion. We have been able to expand our view of parent involvement because we have truly accepted the concept depicted in the African proverb: "It takes an entire village to raise a child."

The following two statements illustrate the emotions involved and the commitment that the parents of the Atenville community are making to the Family/Community Involvement concept:

> *"The Volunteer Program at Atenville Elementary is the most wonderful thing for each and everyone involved from the students to the teachers to the parents. I have been a volunteer for many years, but due to my large family I could not volunteer as often as I would*

have liked to. I enjoy working with the teachers and help each one to the best of my ability. But the most enjoyable part of being a volunteer is the students. To see their smiling faces as they come up to me and give me a hug is really worth all the long hours spent at Atenville.

"The Family Center is a big help to the parents and teachers. It is the main location for volunteers. Instead of roaming the halls or disturbing the classrooms we can work in the Family Center. One of the features of the Family Center is that it is a place where teachers can go when help is needed such as grading papers or making copies.

"When the program first began the teachers were not really sure if they wanted parent volunteers at the school, especially coming into their classrooms. But as time passed and they began to see what a great help we could be, they welcomed us. And naturally as a volunteer we love it when they take time out to praise the things we do for them. It makes the parents feel welcome. I feel that I speak for the entire volunteer program when I say we appreciate the staff, especially Mrs. Dalton, for all their help, patience, and understanding in getting this program established. We feel it is a great success and each day it becomes more like home.

"By being a volunteer you may have many new experiences. These experiences can have a lasting effect on the volunteer as well as the student. The experiences can range from helping a student who would otherwise be lost in the system to giving a little extra attention to a student when it is badly needed. For example, one little boy adopted me as his grandma. That was a great compliment to me. I love the children and feel they love me back. Since becoming a volunteer my life has become more fulfilling.

"I feel that I can contribute to the volunteer program by the experiences I have had through out my life. By raising six children of my own and being a grandmother I feel that I have the knowledge to pass on to others, so that they may benefit from this. I can not imagine never being able to volunteer or to help each child become what they are able to be."

Patsy S. Vance

"When I first heard about the parent volunteer program at Atenville Elementary, it seemed sort of ridiculous to me. What could parents do at school? As a mother of three, I've always been very involved in their education, but it was always done at home or I would go in and talk with their teachers. Little did I know that by the time my youngest child entered kindergarten, I would be volunteering two or three hours everyday. This gave me an opportunity to spend time with my child in a different environment. I could visibly see her

progress not only on an academic level but on a social level as well. I feel by my volunteering, it gives my child a sense of security. I can now help her better with her schoolwork or any other problems she may encounter. Volunteering is also very rewarding. Whether you're helping do a bulletin board or opening a milk for a small child, you know that in some small way, even as a volunteer, you have contributed something positive in a child's life.

"As a parent, I would like to say this is a wonderful program which provides many opportunities for parents and children. I feel very fortunate to be a part of this program."

Gwenn Vance

If this very perceptive African proverb is true, then the total village must be included in the "total" decision making process of the school. Atenville Elementary faculty, staff, and parents have decided that this *will* take place. The Atenville Action Research Team members who have developed the current model have consistently made efforts to include three parents, three teachers, the parent coordinator, the principal, and a higher education facilitator. The "token" inclusion model of parent involvement in many schools is a paternalistic relationship that schools have established with parents that has never been effective and certainly does not have research to support such a relationship with parents.

Parents need to understand the "joys" and "frustrations" of the classroom. Parents need to understand that teachers are teaching under difficult conditions and those conditions many times dictate the educational outcomes of the school.

The children that attend Atenville Elementary School are too precious to leave their futures merely to chance. Parents are very capable of making rational decisions if accurate information is provided. The Action Research Team is the vehicle that gives the "village" the accurate information that is vital if tough decisions are going to be made outside the arena of emotion, politics, favoritism, and bureaucracy.

A statement by the school secretary, Dottie Adkins, of Atenville Elementary places a special concluding perspective on the impact that family-community involvement programs will have on a school system:

"As the secretary of Atenville Elementary for 17 years, I often had a 'bird's eye view' of the educational environment of what was an average rural school in a community where everyone knew each other

and often each other's concerns. A school where often the only reason a parent came to the school was to lodge a complaint. The school philosophy, as well as the state and county's philosophy, seemed to be "just leave everything to us, we will educate your child." Over the years, as different teachers and administrators came into the school, this attitude was found to be unacceptable. These teachers and administrators realized that parent involvement was an integral part of a child's educational process and that something needed to be done to bring about a change.

"In the initial stages of formulating a plan for organizing parents into a functioning body, I would often wonder if the school would be full of complaining parents that would, in turn, create a chaotic atmosphere. After all, didn't we have a good school? But as plans began to take shape, I began to envision a school where parents would feel welcome to participate in different aspects of their child's education, a school which would become the focal point of the community. There was already a small group of parents who had come together to work with the teachers and principal to revitalize the PTA which had been dormant for years and from this small group would grow the Atenville Parent Program.

"As part of the team which helped to develop the Atenville Elementary Parent Involvement Program and later, as a member of the Action Research Team, I feel fortunate indeed to be a part of this innovative and impacting program. I have witnessed the evolution of this program from its beginning stages, where lots of times we had to learn through the old fashioned trial and error method, into the streamlined program it is today. Not only has this program affected the Atenville community, but it is now affecting schools throughout the county and state. When parents in other communities learn the extent of parent involvement at Atenville, they are no longer satisfied to 'just sit back and leave everything to teachers and administrators.' Not only that, but children want their parents involved because they realize, even at an early age, they benefit from this involvement.

"From the perspective of an employee, I now see all school employees including teachers, classroom aides, custodians, cooks, bus drivers and myself relying on our parent volunteers for advice, help, and support as we go about making Atenville Elementary truly a place that succeeds in doing what our school motto states, 'making your child's world better'."

Secretary
Atenville Elementary School

Atenville Elementary School will never be the same and the genesis of this remarkable transition must primarily focus on the role of the Action Research Team and the inclusion of parents in the decision making process of not only a school but a county. Teachers are more sensitive to how they communicate with parents. An example of this new sensitivity may specifically be that teachers try to avoid education "jargon" in parent conferences. Parents (via Action Research Team meetings) believe that communication is vital if the "village" is going to understand the need of the professional staff but the parents and staff must speak the same "language." Teachers at Atenville Elementary School now communicate with parents in terms that they understand. This effort to change has not gone unnoticed or unappreciated. The "village" has continued to use the action research team forum to express "needs" and applaud "victories."

An Action Research Team member shared the best comment regarding the value of participation on the research team: "I always perceived research as only numbers and statistics. Now I see research as children, families, and teachers interacting for the positive advancement of the 'village'. I will never forget the vital role action research has played in formulating the educational direction of our 'village'."

Other Action Research Team members shared their views regarding the value of being members of the Action Research Team and the project's impact upon the school:

> *"Having the opportunity to serve as a member of the Action Research Team during our Parents as Educational Partners Program has been a very worthwhile experience. Witnessing our parent program grow from a handful of volunteers to over sixty volunteers has allowed us to see firsthand the importance of having parents involved in the educational process of their children. In the past three years we have seen many positive changes take place within our school because parents have been involved in the decision making process. Empowering parents to become involved, valuing their opinion and wanting them to make the right decision have all been accomplishments our research committee has tried to achieve. One major result of this program is that our staff is no longer isolated from the parents of our students. We now have the 'whole village' involved in educating our children."*
>
> *"Being a part of the Action Research Team has allowed me to be an integral part of the growth and development of our parent program. I have had the privilege of helping determine what aspects of our program were beneficial, what changes were to be made, and how to make the necessary changes. I have watched our children, parents*

and educators become better communicators, establish friendships and become actual partners in the education of our children. The cooperation and feeling of acceptance that has grown between the home and school has provided fertile ground for new ideas, challenges, and learning to occur. The program has now become such a part of our school and our lives that school without parents is incomprehensible."

School policy has been altered in one school and one county because of an Action Research Team that seriously addressed its role as a forum to bring about educational reform. The next step is to provide research data to the West Virginia Department of Education that will demonstrate that the Atenville Elementary School model is not an "accident" but a "glimpse into the future" — a future that values parent participation, the communication of "equals," the worth of every child and every family, and a future that will never permit favoritism, political agendas, bureaucracy or emotionalism to ever be more important than accurate information (data) obtained by dedicated members of the "village."

Fairfield Court Elementary School's Fantastic Story: Teamwork Through Home, School, and Community

By: Virgie Binford
Barbara Giles
Ron Robertson
Margaret Walker

INTRODUCTION

The Fantastic Follow Through Project at the Fairfield Court Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia is a partnership serving children and their families from kindergarten through third grade. The goals of the project are to:

- ***Provide powerful learning experiences at home and school for children residing in neighboring public and low-income housing;***
- ***Develop powerful social supports for project participants and their families to combat social ills such as drug and alcohol abuse and crime;***
- ***Help children and families participating in the program to become powerful resources for their children, the school and the broader community.***

The project was started as part of the Federally funded Follow-Through program. Follow Through is a twenty-five year old comprehensive early childhood program (K-3) designed to help children sustain the gains made by Head Start. Follow-Through funding for the Richmond Public Schools ended in 1987. However, the district provides in-kind support for the continuation of the program at Fairfield Court.

Those of us who have been closely involved in the project are from different generations. We are grandmothers and young moms, veteran teachers and new teachers, well-known ministers and "twenty-something" youth workers. We have different ideas about why so many children in our community never go on to college and waste their talents on the street. But we agree on one thing: What our children and families need now is a hand-up not a hand-out. In the pages which follow we describe some of the ways that parents, educators, and community leaders have put our hands together to lift our children out of educational failure.

The Fairfield Court Elementary School

The Fairfield Court Elementary School is a one-story brick and wood building located in the middle of two low-income housing projects primarily inhabited by single-parent families. We serve approximately 530 students from pre-school through grade five. All but a handful are African-American and have English as a first language. Close to 92% of our student body is eligible for free-lunch.

When you first enter our school, you are impressed by the soft chatter of children interacting with teachers and support service teams of paraprofessionals, community and parent volunteers that range from teenagers to grandparents. The doors to our school are always open to welcome parents and others who visit and work with us during the school day. To the right of the entrance is the main office, perhaps the busiest room in the school (apart from the cafeteria). Parents who are volunteering at our school come here first to sign in and visit with the school secretary.

Every month at Fairfield Court is Black History month. Our school community has strong pride in our African-American tradition. A narrow hallway leads from the main entrance to the multi-purpose room which serves as a cafeteria, an auditorium, and a classroom for special instructional programs such as music and creative arts. The hallway is often papered with students' stories and drawings of respected black leaders, both nationally known and from our own community.

If you looked for an empty room, you probably would not find one. We do not have a lot of space at our school. Every classroom and the school library is being used practically every minute of the day for instructional purposes. We have to use the cafeteria, at the front of the school, for every group activity. Gym classes are held on stage. Assembly programs are held in the same place. Students have complained that it is hard to eat lunch when other students are working out on stage.

The Fairfield Court Community

Our school is surrounded by low-income and public housing. Unlike the high-rise projects in bigger urban cities, the apartments here are single one and two story units built very close together. Some of the units have been occupied by the same family for years. They

have small gardens and look well-kept. Other units have the look of apartments no one calls home for long. Drug dealers hang out on their steps.

On nice days there may be a lot of people out on their stoops — neighbors talking across to each other and children playing in the shared front yards. But in the evening and in some sections even during the day, these streets are unsafe to walk on. The police classify our neighborhood as a high-crime area. Drug dealers do a brisk business here. Increasingly, the crime has begun to spill into the daylight hours. Last month, a child leaving the school was caught in the cross-fire of neighborhood gangs.

In spite of the density of our population, there are few social services within easy reach. Our small recreation center is funded by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and provides only limited activities for children and families. Its facilities are meager and a limited staff operates it on a part-time basis.

No health facilities are in the neighborhood. A few churches are within walking distance and small grocery shops are available for residents.

We have had to reach inside the heart of the community to fill in some of the gaps. The Astoria Beneficial Club is a local fraternal organization with an over 20-year tradition of supporting our community. A subgroup of this club has adopted the school. Six or seven active members are mentoring students and do everything they can to make families feel comfortable at the school. Last year, they raised money to provide parents with a free lunch on the days that they were volunteering.

About two blocks away is the local high school, called The John F. Kennedy High School. We have recruited a cadre of high school students to serve as younger mentors for all children. Students in the culinary school help out by catering for important parent-school events, like the parents' awards dinner. We now have agreements with the Virginia Commonwealth Extension Program, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Health and Safety Department, and the Toyota program. Through these collaborations, we are drawing local resources into the school to increase supports available to families. But after school and on weekends, needs often go unmet.

THREE-PART APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

We have taken a three-part approach to teaching and learning. This approach pulls together resources of families, teachers and other school staff, concerned residents, and business leaders to create powerful learning experiences for children at home, at school, and in the community.

The home, school, and community are three important learning centers in a child's development.

> "I have witnessed that success in school is based upon the tender, loving care of concerned and committed families, teachers and volunteers that will draw out the best in every child."
>
> Teacher, JoAnn Brunson

Home is the foundation for later learning. It is the institution where attitudes toward self and others are formed. It is the place where parents are the first and most important teachers in forming ideas about all aspects of growth and development. Home is a role modeling factory where children imitate what they see and hear. It is important that the models are positive and focused on helping children believe that they are important and can achieve in the world of work and play.

School is the connecting link with the home. Schools must accept every child as a "biological wonder" who can fulfill his/her dreams and make a difference in the world as a learner and as a teacher. The curriculum of the school is comprehensive and includes the "whole child" in addressing the needs and interests in physical, mental, social, and emotional development through a partnership with the family.

Community (including church leaders, storekeepers, community workers, city workers, and others) is the link between home and school. The community provides the services and supports that school and families often cannot, such as accessible health services and mentors. Community is also the place where the child builds an appreciation and respect for the world of which he/she is a part.

Implementation of the Three-Part Approach

> "It makes me feel good about myself that I'm helping other people learn how to explain things to their children in a better way, instead of just saying, 'Do this!'"
>
> Esther Taylor, Parent

Home Activities. To create a strong foundation at home, Fairfield Court decided to implement a home visitor project with paraprofessional parent educators serving as home visitors. The parent educators and parents work as a team to make the home a learning laboratory for positive parent-child interaction.

- A home visit begins with a letter or a call from the parent educator to a parent to confirm the time of the next home visit.

- The parent educator and the child's classroom teacher discuss the kinds of instructional activities from which the child might benefit. For instance, the child may be struggling with number recognition. The parent educator and teacher may agree that the home visit should focus on helping the child become familiar with counting and matching numbers. The parent educator will develop an activity where the child is asked to count chairs, beans, or spoons and match them with cut-out numbers.

- When the parent educator arrives at the home, she asks the parent how she has been and asks her to discuss any concerns she might have about her child or life in general. For example, the parent educator will follow-up on a referral she gave to the parent. Did you call the clinic about your child's immunization? Did the housing authority respond to your requests to turn down the heat for the health of your babies?

- The parent educator explains the home learning activity to the parent. There are four points that are always raised no matter what the activity: What is the activity? Why should the child learn this? How will it be taught? What are parents' ideas for making the activity more fun and constructive for the child?

- The parent educator first works through the activity with the parent and then asks the parent to try it with her own child. The parent may suggest a new approach to the activity that reflects her own understanding of children's needs.

- During the last five or ten minutes of the visit, the parent educator will usually update the parent on any upcoming events, make a plan for the next visit and provide an extra bit of encouragement for parents to participate in school or community activities. An example of a supportive pitch is, "You are a good parent and therefore have a lot you can share with other parents and the school."

- The parent educator keeps a record of each visit. Did the parent keep the appointment? What actually happened during the home visit (as opposed to what was planned)? What questions or concerns did the parent have? What is the time of the next visit?

- Many parents who receive home visits keep a journal of home learning activities. They are encouraged to consider two questions: What did I do with my child (today or this week) that we really enjoyed? What else might I do or do differently next time?

- Handbooks were developed in order to pass on what is learned from different voices. Parents' entries into their journals have been compiled into a resource handbook for other parents on ways to build their child's self-esteem. And parent educators, teachers, and parents have compiled a resource handbook on home learning activities for parents and children.

Classroom Activities. An instructional team made up of a certified teacher, parent educator and volunteers, and mentors (college students from Virginia Commonwealth University) create a personal collaborative learning climate within the classroom. There are often three or more adults working with a classroom at the same time.

> "I have learned a lot of things since I started to volunteer at Fairfield Court Elementary School- how to really work, how to understand kids. I couldn't get a job and then I started volunteering as a parent. Suddenly, I had somewhere to go. It gave me a lot of things to think about other than my problems. After a while, it made me feel like I was doing something for myself and helping kids. The kids seem to like having someone around other than the teacher. I am like a big brother or a big sister to them."
>
> Mary Boyd, Parent Volunteer

- The teacher is the facilitator of learning.
  She meets with the parent educators, volunteers, and mentors to discuss activities for the week and where their help is most needed. For example, the teacher may be conducting a developmental reading lesson with a group of students. She may assign the parent educator the task of reading aloud to one group — finding information on a special theme in social studies or science to another. The mentor may work on a one-to-one basis with a child playing a game or reading. The parent educator continues with an adaptation of these activities plus parenting activities when she visits the child's parents in the home.

Community and Schoolwide Activities. Citizens ranging from teenagers to retired citizens are recruited to assist in home and school activities that will empower parents to take charge of their lives and build their self-esteem.

- Each year the community advocates host a series of workshops. The workshops focus on helping parents support their child's healthy social, emotional and physical development. They are led by men and women with a first-hand knowledge of families. For instance, the nutrition component includes workshops on using resources to assist in planning low-cost meals and budgeting and using coupons. The career development component includes leadership training workshops to help parents become active networkers in their own communities. Workshops in the social service component include information sessions on how to access city services, rap sessions on understanding children and their behavior, and sessions on communication skills, nutrition, discipline, self-esteem, grooming, and budgeting.

- In addition to workshops, community advocates individually and collectively organize events to advocate for broader changes that can help children and families in the community. Each year, the Fairfield Court community and the Federal grants office of the Richmond Public Schools are the primary organizers of an annual Parenting is Basic Conference. Through a hands-on approach, the conference strives to prepare parents across the city of Richmond to be active contributes toward school improvement. Most of the organizers and consultants are people from the community who have actually been working in the schools. Last year's conference included workshops on "Getting Drugs off the Streets," "Safe Places in Richmond to Go with Children," and "How to Involve People and Keep their Commitment."

- In order to make the conference interesting and accessible to everybody, conference planners arrange substitutes for teachers, as well as car-pools and child care for every parent who wants to attend the conference. Each year the conference is held in a nice hotel to give people a chance to look their best and feel proud to participate.

PROJECT ROLES

An administrative team of a project director, principal, home-school coordinator, and project facilitator coordinates our three-part approach to teaching and learning. These individuals are supported by the leadership of parent educators and community advocates who connect the project to resources and changing needs of families and the broader community.

Project Facilitator

The project facilitator takes the lead in connecting the school with resources of families and the broader community. The current project facilitator, Dr. Virgie Binford, works 8-10 days per month and is currently supported by a private foundation grant. Like the parent educators, Dr. Binford has worked within the Fairfield Court community for many years as a Head Start and Follow-Through program director.

Dr. Binford's contributions to the project have been vast. She spends much of her time meeting with the principal, school staff, and parents to plan and coordinate schoolwide activities. She conducts workshops for the entire faculty and staff on how to build parent involvement and positive discipline habits.

She assists with program dissemination through public speaking, newsletters,

newspapers, and one-on-one conferences and meetings with community advocates to get out press releases.

She talks regularly with community advocates and parent volunteers to discuss the ways that they can support the school.

Home-School Coordinator

> "...I've also learned how to work more patiently with both my son and my daughter. Each day I get closer to success because without my self-esteem and the Parent Coordinator's push and determination, I believe I would have probably given up."
>
> Esther Taylor, Volunteer

The home-school coordinator is responsible for coordinating activities of parent educators, volunteers, and mentors. The current home-school coordinator, Barbara Giles, compiles record-keeping forms of parent educators and regularly reviews information to determine how many home visits have been made, what activities have been accomplished, and any common concerns being raised. She meets once a month with all parent educators to problem solve around the most pressing issues and to celebrate wins such as a parent enrolling in a GED program.

The home-school coordinator keeps a list of volunteering needs in the school. For instance, on Friday, one teacher may be doing fingerpainting and need some help. A parent who signs up to volunteer in the main office will be invited by the home-school coordinator to help out in the classroom and activities where she is most needed. Mentors and volunteers also check in first at Ms. Giles office. This helps the school keep track of adults in the building and is an important accountability measure for high school students volunteering during school hours.

The home-school coordinator is also in charge of developing materials such as videotapes, worksheets, and training tips to support the work of parent educators. Together with the project coordinator, she addresses the concerns of parents who have requested additional information and assistance beyond that of the principal.

Principal

The principal, Dr. Carolyn Spurlock, provides leadership in interpreting and implementing the goals and objectives of the school. Her consent and support is needed to schedule workshops, encourage teacher involvement, and establish contacts with outside agencies.

Dr. Spurlock plays a critical role in encouraging greater involvement with family and community as one standard of evaluation for teachers. She also makes family and community involvement an important focus of staff development sessions and the school improvement plan.

Project Director/District Advocate

> "Coupled with this energy of determination, it is vital for parents to join forces with teachers, school administrators and the community toward meeting the challenges of tomorrow."
>
> Ron Robertson, Project Director

The project director's primary role has been to supervise staff, write proposals, prepare budgets, and link the school community needs with those of the district. The Follow Through Project has been fortunate to have a full-time director who works out of the Richmond Public Schools' central office. Ron Robertson is the critical link between the Fairfield Court community and the public school administrators who oversee Federal and state grants as well as the school board and the superintendent's office. Through the proximity of his office and his networks, Mr. Robertson has helped make sure that family and community involvement at Fairfield Court and elsewhere in the city remains a priority. He has been instrumental in getting the district to support the project through in-kind support.

Parent Educators

> "I am the social worker, the doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, the friend, whatever the child and family needs me to be."
>
> Parent Educator

Parent educators are responsible for linking families to school and to community resources. The team of thirteen parent educators receive part-time salaries which are now supported under a private grant. They have shared in the challenges of being young mothers living in low-income housing and have a first-hand knowledge both of parents'

needs and community resources. The community surrounding Fairfield Court has few social service agencies, day care programs, clinics, and playgrounds, but parent educators are skilled at teaching parents to get the supports they need.

On a typical day, a parent educator may drive a parent and child to the doctor, develop new home-learning activities from the library's discarded magazine collection, consult with a teacher on a child's absences, and run a workshop.

Parent educators build trust between the parents and the school. Many of the parents of the Fairfield Court community have had negative educational experiences and are wary of even setting foot in the school, much less responding to requests for information. Through regular and consistent visits, the parent educators let parents know that they can be counted on. Through conversations and modeling, they build parents' confidence that there is a lot that they can offer the school.

Through the parent educator, the school is reintroduced to the family as an institution that cares about their children and needs their help.

Community Advocates

Community advocates are made up of many different groups and individuals who take the lead in tapping parents and the school as important agents of change in community renewal.

> "I enjoy watching the children in their day-to-day activities, seeing the way they improve, taking the children places and watching as they face new experiences -- the way they blossom with each new experience."
>
> Parent

The Astoria Beneficial Club, a local men's social club with a twenty-year history, began its relationship with the school by providing members to work as tutors and mentors. By their own description, many of the Astoria Pals have had lives of struggle and attribute their own success and independence to someone believing in them. They have played that role for many of the children and parents at Fairfield Court.

They have raised funds to provide parent volunteers with free lunches and have

organized community forums to raise city officials' awareness about the real needs of families.

As individuals, they have used their connections with local business leaders and political machinery to "get early and accurate" information on how district budget cuts will affect programs, to lay the groundwork for collaboration between the school district and housing authority, and to draw positive media attention to school activities.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The Changing Roles of Community, Families, and School

We have documented a number of important developments over the past two and half years. To help us keep track of changes, we took "snapshots" of activities at our school at two points in the life of our project. The first "snapshot" was taken approximately a year after the project was first begun; the second was taken three or four months before our funding from IRE ran out. To create the "snapshots," we drew upon different kinds of information: surveys of parents and teachers, the records of the home-school coordinator and project facilitator, newspaper clippings, excerpts from parent and teacher journals, time sheets, and photographs.

We divided activities into three categories: (I) Activities initiated by families, (ii) activities initiated by the school, and (iii) activities initiated by the community. When we compared "snapshots" from one year to the next, we found evidence of the following:

Home

> "Participating in our newly formed PTA gave me an opportunity to be a good leader."
>
> Parent

Parents have expanded their role beyond that of participant and begun to make direct contributions to program development and assessment at our school. At the outset of this project, opportunities for parent involvement were limited and tended to be traditional. Parents were recruited as volunteers for field trips and school activities. They were represented on the Parent-Teacher Organization but were largely silent partners. Beginning in January of 1992, we started to

see richer participation in children's learning. With each month of the project, parent educators found that they were able to complete more home visits. Parents kept their appointments. Teachers documented that more parents receiving home visits were completing and sending in home-learning activities.

In the months following, a number of parents began to offer their ideas to teachers on how to improve home-learning activities. As they tried an activity out with their child, they would discover something that really worked, jot it down in a journal and/or share with the teacher via the parent educator or a note. In this way, teachers and parent educators were able to update the resource book that had been developed in the early 70's (and they were still using) and make it more relevant to families' lives. In January of 1994, a handful of parents compiled their best strategies for building children's self-esteem into a booklet for other parents. The booklet includes suggestions for working with children in the home, school, and community and has become part of the school's parent training workshops.

School

Since the project began the school has assumed more responsibility for training parents, teachers, and community leaders to work together. One year after the project began, sessions on parent involvement were included as part of teachers' staff development sessions. Concurrently, the project team formed a teachers' subcommittee — where teachers had the opportunity to share concerns about partnerships and develop classroom strategies. The school was a primary sponsor of the city's Parenting is Basic conference. The school paid for substitutes to cover classes so that teachers could attend.

In 1993, the school beefed up its efforts to train community volunteers and parents. It tapped the expertise of school staff and parents in new ways — e.g. inviting parent educators to offer workshops to parents on summer fun activities. It established collaborative arrangements with other institutions and projects. The project facilitator arranged to have instructors from the local land grant college offer workshops on school grounds. Staff from local adult learning centers and colleges were invited to share information about educational opportunities and financial aid.

Community

Community groups have expanded their role in the school as advocates for school and community change. In 1992, the Astoria Pals adopted the school. Men from the Astoria Club had been involved with the school in the past, but the work they did was always individually initiated and focused. They mainly spent a day in the school when their time and schedules permitted. The "formal adoption" of the school by Astoria Pals changed the group's relationship to the school. The Pals began to work with the school in addressing families' needs in the context of the school and the broader community.

> "Working in the Fairfield Court Program enabled me to elevate my self-esteem in my coursework at Kennedy High School and also gave me self-confidence to work with young children in an elementary school."
>
> James Gerard, Mentor

One of the first things the Pals did was to host a community-wide breakfast to discuss children's and families' needs. The Astoria Pals used their networks to get members of the local political establishment and media to attend the event. The purpose of the event was to create a forum where parents and other members of the community could identify for themselves the most pressing needs facing children in their community. Over 200 parents, community leaders, media representatives and the mayor attended the breakfast. The breakfast was cooked and served by the Pals themselves — as a sign of support and respect for the families present.

Another thing the Pals did was to earmark some of their own funds to provide parents volunteering in the school with free lunches. Pals were alerted to this need through their participation on the project team. In a discussion on obstacles to parent involvement, Pals were told that providing parents with lunch would make it easier for parents to spend the whole day at the school. For parents with very limited resources, it was also an additional incentive to come.

Astoria pals met with the principal, the project facilitator, and cafeteria staff to offer funds to cover the costs of school lunches for parent volunteers. A record-keeping system was set up with the school secretary for parents to sign and receive a lunch ticket each time they volunteered. Each month, the pals paid the monthly bill. This service reaped a two-fold benefit: parents increased their number of volunteer hours, and they were able to enjoy eating lunch with children.

IMPACT

> "The program has been rewarding for me and my granddaughter. I had a chance to visit the classroom every day, and in that way I was learning how to help my granddaughter with her schoolwork."
>
> Grandparent

The activities described previously suggest to us that a new kind of family and community involvement is taking root at our school. We have discovered the distinct but complementary contributions that community groups, school staff, and parents can make. Classroom innovations, community safety, parents' self-esteem are not seen as unrelated issues — but integrated and central to the task of school improvement. As community groups, school staff, and parents have assumed responsibility for advocacy, training, and program improvement, supports for children's learning have increased. Here are some of the new resources in place or planned for children at our school:

Home

1. *Since the outset of the program, eight parents have taken steps to further their own education and expand career opportunities by enrolling in GED classes and community colleges.*

2. *There has been a steady increase in the number of home visits successfully completed by parent educators. Our records confirm that parents are canceling their appointments less frequently and more regularly completing the home-learning activities. Since 1993, we have seen a 75% decrease in the number of home visits canceled each month and a 50% increase in the number of home learning assignments completed each month.*

School

1. *Our Parent-teacher Organization is now an active decision-making team within the school. At the outset of the project, the PTA was dormant and had ceased to attract members. A group of parents (many of whom were also project team members) expressed concern to the principal and volunteered to call a meeting to revitalize the organization. With the support of the principal, parents and teachers assumed leadership in the election of officers, planning of programs, and setting regular meeting dates. Where before the organization looked to the school for funds, it now helps provide needed services — e.g., providing fruit and juice breaks to children during test-taking week.*

2. *Teachers and the home-school coordinator have started a Parent of the Month program for parent volunteers. Each month we honor the parent with the most volunteer hours by displaying his or her photo in a prominent place in the school. This activity reflects a growing effort on the part of our school to recognize the contributions of parents.*

3. *Parent educators have created a video on home visits for teachers and others and have offered workshops at the annual city-wide conference.*

Community

1. *We have a new original sculpture on school grounds. It was created by a local artist with the help of the children at the school. This is one of the few public works of art in our community and is a daily joy for children and families.*

2. *A recreation center for the children of the Fairfield Court community has been planned. A member of the community (a former resident of Fairfield Court) has pledged part of his winnings from the state lottery to build the center. A planning committee which includes parents and teachers from Fairfield Court, business leaders, and others has been convened to make sure the center reflects the needs of the community.*

3. *Over the past two years, police protection in our community has increased. On a number of occasions, the public works department has sent trucks to clean up debris in and around our school neighborhood.*

EARLY CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

At the outset of the project, we surveyed parents and teachers regarding their perceptions of school and program priorities. We gathered this information through a schoolwide survey, focus groups, and interviews. When we compiled the data, a number of common themes emerged.

- **Make social services for children and families available after school, on weekends and in the summer.** There are very few social services in our neighborhood, few people have cars, and public transportation into the center of Richmond is sporadic. Consequently, when the school is closed, "we and our children have nowhere to go," families told us. On one hand, the broader community was referred to as part of the problem — on the other, as an untapped resource.

As one teacher commented, "the Fairfield Court community is rich with African American talent, it's time we (the school) tapped all of this wisdom and love for our students."

> "Teachers are too busy to talk to me about my child, I don't want to be a disruption"
>
> Parent

- **Strengthen collaboration between parents and teachers.** In a schoolwide survey of over 284 parents, only 2% of parents described involving and informing parents as a perceived priority for teachers at the school. Only 1% of teachers identified partnership with the school to solve problems as a priority for parents. Instead, parents and teachers characterized their relationship as focused on monitoring and support for children's homework (75%). In focus groups, parents and teachers asked for a different kind of relationship — one in which parents and teachers interact around substantive issues rather than whether or not a child has completed his or her homework.

- **Extend comprehensive services for children and families through grade 5.** Our school has a long history of providing comprehensive services — health, educational, and social supports — to children grades K-3 through our participation in the Follow Through program, which is aimed at sustaining gains for children in Head Start. In focus groups and questionnaires, teachers underscored the need to provide comprehensive services to older grades as well. "Families and children don't stop needing when their child enters the fourth grade," said one. Other parents concurred, "There is a lot children do without. Let us not make our program one more thing."

- **Rebuild school and community pride.** When IRE first approached us with the offer to start a new family and community involvement program, we had a meeting for anyone interested. The meeting was so big — we got media attention for it. This was the first time in a long time that the major newspapers had paid attention to what our school was doing right. At this meeting, one long-standing member of the community and a former student stood up and reminded us that "Fairfield Court has been ignored for a long time. When we try to get the major city papers to cover us, all they want to hear about is murders. It is time we took things into our own hands and rebuild our schools and community's image from the inside out. How can we expect our parents and students to care about our school when all they read and hear is bad news?"

- **Increase the amount of space available for parents.** Parents still do not have a space

in the school to really call their own. Parent volunteers have been sharing the teacher's lunch room but that room is too small for the workshops, consultations, and other things that parents say that they want more of. The space parents have been using for workshops is in the middle of a hallway and disruptions from passing children are constant. The high crime rate in the area makes it difficult to schedule workshops in the evenings.

- **We need more staff!** Parent educators are being stretched thin. One parent educator typically serves approximately 50 families (2 classrooms). The program is structured so that each family will be visited at least once a month to allow personal relationships to develop and to eliminate the mistrust that has developed between the school and community over the years. But as classrooms and needs continue to grow, parent educators are finding it increasingly difficult to offer the kind of time and support that they know can really make a difference. The pace of their day and lack of resources means that they have less and less time to do the kind of sharing and problem-solving that they have found so useful.

LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenges such as these create a distance between the three parts of our teaching and learning framework — home, school, and community. They create gaps where some families go unserved in important ways. They place a strain on relationships between parents, teachers, and community. As we work on these obstacles, we have begun to recognize the important role parents can play in linking strategies of the home, school, and broader community.

The following are some of the things we have learned as well as recommendations we make for our future:

- **Through their personal and professional networks, parents can help connect the school to untapped funding opportunities.** A parent-community connection has created a real possibility that we will have a new space (the recreation center) where families and school staff can work and learn together.

- **By volunteering, serving as lunch monitors and teaching classes, parents can give teachers the time to become informed and invested in partnership activities.** Parents covered teachers' classes one day so that they could attend an in-service training on parent involvement.

- **Parents can serve as assessors of school and community needs.** Parents at our school compiled the information from our community-wide breakfast and developed a list of recommendations for the city.

- **Parents can extend the reach of staff by developing materials that are disseminated throughout the school and community.** Parents at our school wrote a booklet on strategies for supporting children's learning at home that has reached a large number of parents.

- **Increase the number of parent educators so that families throughout the school can receive home visits.**

- **Increase creative activities for parents and children.** Too many of our "special activities" target what students and parents do not know. We need more activities that nurture what children in our school are interested in and excel at.

- **Establish a "Families' Futures Fund" to support parents' educational development.** The fund could help pay for the incidental costs of education — e.g., registration and transportation costs, special activities — that prevent so many of our parents from taking advantage of educational opportunities that might otherwise be subsidized.

- **Hire someone with a background in career development and substance abuse to staff the parent center.** This is an area of expertise our parent educators do not have and should not be expected to address alone.

Boxes for Babes Project:
An Extension of Parents as Teachers in Ferguson-Florissant School District

by Carol S. Klass & the Project's Action Research Team

INTRODUCTION

Historical Overview

In 1981, the Missouri State Department of Education and The Danforth Foundation funded four school districts in the state to develop a pilot program for parents with children 0-3. The program, Parents as Teachers (PAT), based largely on the work of Dr. Burton White, focused on the development of the home visit, group meetings, and periodic assessment of children, in order to provide information on child growth and development to 300 first-time parents. The program's goal was to ensure optimal development and later school success for young children. Staff members worked with Dr. White to develop the program curriculum. Ferguson-Florissant School District was one of the four districts chosen for this pilot program.

At the conclusion of the three-year pilot program, the Missouri Legislature appropriated funding for the program to be mandated in every school district in Missouri; and the Department of Education began a state program for educating parent educators. In 1993-94, PAT served 68,050 families in Missouri; and currently 1,400 replications exist in 44 states plus Washington D.C., England, New Zealand, West Indies, and Australia. In 1993-94, the Ferguson-Florissant School District has enrolled in PAT 1,300 families, served by 22 parent educators.

Rationale for Boxes for Babes Project

With a limited budget and emerging recognition of the needs of the PAT population, we in the Ferguson-Florissant School District tried to focus on those groups needing

specialized and increased support. We began first by working with children with special needs and the high-risk teen-parent population. We also were concerned with those parents having limited literacy skills. In the fall of 1992, we began a pilot literacy project funded by Citicorp; and families in this project also participated in Boxes for Babes. This literacy project expanded into Even Start in the fall of 1993. Increasingly parent educators voiced concern about children with limited expressive language skills, especially those who were around 2 ½ years old. Lack of language/communication skill among these children was noticeable, and often seemed to accompany inadequate parent-child interaction. Given this observed pattern of inadequate parent-child interaction and accompanying language/communication delay, we began assessing parent-child interaction of these families.

As we re-evaluated the goals of our PAT program, once again concern for parent-child interaction emerged. While the original intent of PAT was to provide knowledge and information to parents, we became acutely aware that we needed to promote parents' interactions with their child . In addition, we increasingly became sensitive to the pivotal role of the parent/parent educator relationship in promoting increased parent understanding of child development and improved parenting skill. In other words, just as the *relationship between parent and child* is pivotal to the child's development, so too, the relationship between parent and parent educator is pivotal to the parent's ability to integrate child development knowledge and improve parenting skill. The project soon developed a two-tiered focus: 1) striving to improve parent-child interaction, and 2) improving parent-educator/parent interaction.

The work of Daniel Stern, Stanley Greenspan, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Rose Bromwich, and Gerald Mahoney guided our project goals and procedures. Daniel Stern and Stanley Greenspan provided the theoretical and research underpinning for understanding the nature of infants and toddlers, and how caregiving interactions are the context for development. Urie Bronfenbrenner's work helped us develop an ecological lens in both our understanding of families and our work with them. Rose Bromwich's discussion of her parent-child interaction project for infants and toddlers expanded our thinking regarding practical dimensions of the project. And Gerald Mahoney's work provided protocols for parent educators to judge the adequacy of their parents' interactions with their infants and toddlers.

In response to the language/communication needs of our PAT toddlers, we proposed a project entitled, **Boxes for Babes**. Boxes for Babes would work with a small group of parents to enhance parent-child interaction and accompanying development of language and

communication skills. A long-term aim of this project was to develop a model that we could integrate into the entire PAT project.

Project Initiation

In order to target the families to be involved in the Boxes for Babes project, we reviewed with the PAT staff Mahoney's characteristics of parental style. Some of our staff had been trained in the Transactional Intervention Program developed by Mahoney and Powell for special needs preschoolers. We then asked parent educators to complete Mahoney's Parent Behavior Rating Scale (1990) on each of their parents in order to target potential candidates for the project.

The Boxes for Babes Project

The Boxes for Babes Project aimed to facilitate parent-child interaction, which in turn promoted infant and toddler's language and communication. PAT parent educators increased their 5 home visits per year to monthly visits — a total of 8 or 9 visits each year. For each visit they gave the family a box containing toys, a book, and a booklet which contained parent-child play activity suggestions. Suggested activities invited parent-child interaction, interaction appropriate to the developmental level of the baby or toddler (e.g., promoting self calming for 4-month-old, promoting reciprocal turn taking between parent and toddler for the 18-month-old). During the home visit, parent educators would use one toy from the box to play with the child, and thereby model appropriate adult-child interaction. The parent educator then invited the parent to join the play so that within the home visit, parents actively played with their child. Each home visit also included reading a story and completion of the Baby Biography. Baby Biographies were parents' descriptions to their parent educator of the interesting things their baby is doing. The parent educator wrote these comments down on self-carbon paper, and gave the original to the parent.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Target Population

In January, 1992, parent educators targeted families whom they judged to have poor parent-child interaction. We selected those parents having negative scores on Mahoney's enjoyment, sensitivity, responsiveness, achievement orientation, effectiveness, pace, acceptance, and directiveness scale as families most in need of additional services. We selected 24 families, 12 of whom were teen parents. Beginning in February, 1992, we began serving these target families, all of whom had infants 8-16 months. These families remained in the project until their child was 36 months old.

In the fall of 1992, using the same method of selection, parent educators chose 12 additional families with a child between 8 and 16 months. We had intended once again to have 24 families in Group II; however, we were unable to get referrals from parent educators. In this struggle, we uncovered three dimensions that hindered our recruitment:

1) When the children are this young, parent educators have not made enough visits to know the families well enough to judge parent-child interaction.

2) Often developing rapport with the families at risk for poor parent-child interaction is very difficult; once developed, parent educators are reluctant to "give up" these families.

3) And most importantly, we learned that some parent educators **neither recognize nor promote** parent-child interaction on their home visits. As a result of these project findings, parent-child interaction is now a dominant strand of PAT staff in-service.

In November 1992, we integrated into the project seven families enrolled in the district's PAT Literacy Project. In January, 1993, we changed our strategies for selecting target population. We enlarged the birthday window to include children from birth to 30 months. As a result we enrolled thirty families, 15 of whom were teen parents. In the fall of 1993, the fourth and last cohort of families, 20 in total, joined the Boxes for Babes project.

The curriculum for Boxes for Babes became a part of the district's Even Start program, which began in the fall of 1993. Even Start served 44 families in 1993-94. Even Start conducts two home visits each month. In addition, parents meet for one hour each day for

a parent-child interaction play session. The Boxes and Boxes for Babes curriculum is used for these group sessions.

Project Staff

The Boxes for Babes team included seven parent educators, the district's Director of Early Childhood Special Education, the Director of Early Education, and the action researcher/facilitator. Two parent educators worked exclusively with the PAT teen-parent population. One parent educator worked with families enrolled in a PAT Literacy Project until the fall of 1993, when she became the coordinator of the district's Even Start program. Project staff continued to meet weekly with the district's entire PAT staff for professional development.

The Action Research Team

Project staff also met twice a month to reflect on project happenings and make any needed project adaptations. These meetings became the context for parent educators to share their successes and difficulties with individual families, and in this sharing, to receive empathic support, developmental interpretations, and suggestions. The team meetings also offered a structure for parent educators to collaboratively unpack the meaning of these experiences and to brainstorm new strategies for their work. The action researcher/facilitator is a developmentalist with extended experience in early intervention. When parent educators shared their work, sometimes the facilitator could provide an interpretative lens that sparked new understanding of both infants and toddlers, and parents. But most importantly, the team meetings provided a supportive context for parent educators to feel safe to wrestle with the challenges of work with at-risk families. These meetings were also a context for parent educators to recognize the significant, though small, positive steps that parents are taking as a result of the program (e.g., a parent begins to write her baby's Baby Biography, a parent buys her baby a book or a toy like one in the box, parents spontaneously imitate their child's actions).

To assess the impact we were having on parent-child interaction, we gathered multiple kinds of data through multiple methods:

• ***Action Research Team Meeting Notes.*** Parent educators kept vignettes of different families and home visits and used action research team meetings to analyze these vignettes and brainstorm possible adaptations to assist the parent educators. Themes of parent-child interaction emerged out of these meetings and led to appropriate modifications of the toys and suggested activities of the curriculum.

• ***Observation.*** The action researcher has conduced participant observation in selected home visits. We also have videotaped a small number of these visits.

• ***Informal Interviews.*** The action researcher has conducted open-ended interviews with selected parents and parent educators. An outside researcher interviewed staff regarding the role of the action researcher.

• ***Parent Focus Group Meeting.*** In February, 1992, we initiated a parent focus group meeting. However, attendance was very poor (one couple, and two parents new to the project). Since this effort was not successful, we chose to write a brief evaluation form to be completed during the last home visit of the semester.

• ***Documents and Materials.*** To choose families for this project, parent educators used Gerald Mahoney's Parent Behavior Rating Scale. After each home visit, parent educators completed a Home Visit Record Form (See Appendix C.1). During the visit, they completed a Baby Biography (See Appendix C.2). Parent educators took a box with toys and an activity booklet to each home visit. The action researcher wrote summary observations and reflections of each action research team meeting. Beginning in March, 1993, one parent educator and the Director of Early Education began writing journals. In May and June, 1993, and 1994, parent educators recorded parents' responses to a Boxes for Babes Parent Evaluation Form (See Appendix C.3).

Curriculum

During each month's home visit, parent educators gave each family a box of toys to use until the next visit. The box contained a booklet of suggested activities. Specific themes of parent-child interaction were integrated into these activities and parent guidelines. These themes assisted parent educators in maintaining a clear focus on parent-child interaction.

With increasing age of the child, the themes of parent-child interaction changed. Themes included:

6 wks. to 8 mos.: **attachment behaviors** and **promoting self calming**

8-23 mos.: **promoting parent's imitation** of the child's actions and vocalizations; and **reciprocal turntaking** between child and parent

23-29 mos.: **promoting parallel talk** (describing what one's child is doing as the child acts); and **stretch talk** (expanding their child's verbalizations).

30-36 mos.: **promoting child and parent pretend play**, and **parents' verbalization of children's feelings**.

Activities for each box have a play focus. For example, "Boat in the Bath"focuses on waterplay, and "Let's Eat" provides dishes and a doll for dramatic play. For Group I, we developed 4 boxes, each with a pattern of toys and activities, and 6 boxes for each theme. Each semester, we developed an additional 24 boxes appropriate to the children's increased developmental level. Suggested parent-child play activities focused on the child developmental and appropriate parent-child interaction for that phase (e.g., reciprocal turntaking for an 18-month-old, pretend play for a 30-month-old).

The primary purpose of these boxes is to encourage positive parent-child interaction. The box contains age-appropriate toys to be used for parent-child play, a fingerplay, and a children's book. Each box also includes a booklet describing specific play activities for the included toys. The toys are the **means** for parent educators to initiate play which models appropriate adult-child interaction. After playing with the child, the parent educator invites the parent to join in the play. This parent-child interaction offers a context for parent educators to "coach" parents as needed. Each activity also invites a written parent response (see Appendix C.3). About 10 percent of our parents are writing comments, which often are thoughtful. Other parents verbally have told their parent educators that they think the booklets are very helpful in providing ideas for playing with their child. One parent's comment is typical, "The Boxes reminded me to stop everything, and play with my baby."

Baby Biography

Many of the project families are "at-risk" families (e.g. low-income, single parent, adolescence, minimal education, substance abuser, violence-prone). Some of these parents describe their babies negatively (e.g., stubborn, bad). To assist all parents in learning how to positively observe their child's development, we introduced the **Baby Biography.** Parent educators tell their parents that they have a folder for them to keep special papers about their baby. During each visit, parent educators write down what parents tell them about interesting things their baby does. They use carbon paper, the original being for the parent, and the copy being for the parent educator (see Appendix C.2). Parent educators emphasize that this is a record for parents to have about what is fun about their baby and what their baby is learning, because changes will come so fast, and this will be nice to have throughout the baby's life. Then parent educators write down exactly what the parents say, and how they say it. Often the parent educator will ask a very specific question — e.g., What does your child do in the kitchen right after breakfast? Interestingly, parents want to put down the "good stuff."

The Home Visit

The core of the Parents as Teachers Program is the home visit, which is individualized for each family and child. Visits are approximately one hour in length, and home visitors and parents schedule them monthly throughout the program year, September through May.

In PAT, parent educators are educated to ensure that within each visit, they address five areas:

1) establishment of *rapport* with the family;

2) *observation* of the child, the parent, and parent-child interaction;

3) *discussion* encompassing both observed developmental characteristics of the child and questions and concerns of the parents;

4) a *play activity* with the child and parent; and

5) the parent educator's *summary* of the visit, giving the parent appropriate handouts, and informing the parent of forthcoming PAT activities.

The Boxes for Babes Project included these five areas, but also extended the personal visit in several ways. First, visits were increased from five per program year, to monthly — eight or nine per program year. Second, parent educators brought a "box" of toys, books, and activity ideas that they left with families for a month. The toys and activity booklets provided the parent with concrete tangible suggestions for playing and interacting with their child. Given the low literacy level of many of our parents, this concrete, specific, tangible assistance was an invaluable tool. In addition, these boxes provided a tool for the parent educator to maintain a focus on parent-child interaction. The toys in the box, in a concrete way, helped the parent educator initiate parent-child interaction. The parent educator maintained enhancing parent-child interaction a dominant theme in her approach.

The linchpin of the parent educator's ability to facilitate parents' caregiving skills and understanding of their child's development was the personal relationship that developed between parents and parent educators. Parent educators' relaxed warm style and enthusiasm ripple through each home visit. Their spontaneity and playfulness as they interacted with babies and toddlers communicated their pleasure in the parents' child. Parents spoke of their parent educator as their friend, who is a "joy to have around"; and they look forward to their visits. Parent interview comments are illustrative:

> **Lara**: *She's very comfortable and warm. And she's very interested and enthused about the program* ***and*** *about my child. And I think Andy gets all those warm vibes and feels very comfortable working with her.*
>
> **Jill**: *Very friendly, knowledgeable, helpful — a friend, who comes over to your house to talk with you, to interact with your child, and teach you how to interact with your child. She's been very, very helpful. A lot of times you just don't know what to do with your child during the day. And she comes over and shows me some things you can do.*
>
> **Sally:** *She is just a really nice person. She is always a lady. She respects everybody. If you tell her something, she is not going to tell someone else. She is real easy to talk to.*

Surrogate parenting seems central to working with teen parents. Interview comments are illustrative:

> **LaToya:** *Denise and Katie are like the type that whatever is said in that room, stays in that room; and they are like the type that she gives you a lot of advice. Well, to me she is like a second mother to me. And whatever you need to talk to her about, you can talk to them.*

Cindy: *They're nice; and fun to be with. And if I needed someone to talk to, they were always there to talk to. Like, when I was pregnant, I always felt sad, and they always helped. And the things they do for you--they'd do anything for you.*

Within their home visits, parent educators positively describe both parent and child actions they are observing. In turn, they encourage parents to describe changes they've seen in their child over the month. Once parent and parent educator develop a personal relationship, parents delight in sharing their child's new behaviors and interests. Similarly, they eagerly tell their parent educator about family happenings — a trip to an uncle's farm, a family birthday party, a parent's illness — in a manner reminiscent of sharing with a relative who has stopped by for a visit.

In the spring of 1994, we initiated a four-week single parent support group for single project mothers living with their own parents. The idea for a support group emerged from parent educators' concern that these mothers were experiencing multiple dilemmas and stresses in their dual role as daughter and mother. We provided supper and child care so that mothers could meet with the facilitator and one parent educator for a two-hour support group. These sessions provided a context for mothers to share problems, and then for project staff to provide developmental information, parenting strategies, and suggestions for relating to parents — all within the context of the mother's expressed concerns. Unfortunately, only three mothers participated. The team decided that were we to initiate a similar group in 1994-95, more time and effort would be needed to inform and recruit these single parents.

CHALLENGES FOR PARENT EDUCATORS

At times working with "hard to reach" families can be demoralizing and overwhelming for parent educators. Parent educators' journal entries depict some of their struggles:

There's so much confusion in some of these homes that my visit seems overshadowed. Some of these situations in homes are overwhelming! I need some social work, psychology, knowledge on community resources. The same parents repeatedly don't keep their appointments.

I dread going to this home because it is so dirty. Yet I need to overlook

this, for mom is sweet and really interacts in her child. Today she put a plastic sheet over the dirty floor. The sheet was clean, though smelled of urine.

I'm standing in the extreme cold and bitter wind — ringing a doorbell and knocking; and no answer. I feel angry and frustrated. I need to see this child. I do not feel positive about her development. Mom doesn't stay in the room with me. I usually don't work on Fridays; but that's the only day she can be home.

What a difficult job at times. I was visiting in a home last night, and the parents began a heated argument. (Last year I had referred them to a counselor.) They totally ignored me. Nor were they watching their 18 month-old, who fell on the concrete on the back of his head. I couldn't leave fast enough. I wanted to do something, say something, but I was gone.

I'm tired. Some days, I just can't take on anymore of peoples' problems. I have plenty of my own at home. Why don't people just enjoy their children? Why do they want them to be perfect?

Our most at-risk families are teen-parent families. Initially these teens were never accessible for home visits. A Danforth Foundation grant allowed development of day care in the high schools so that parent educators can meet with parent and child at the parents' school. In interviews with parent educators about working with teen mothers, these parent educators portray their multiple challenges:

We wear two hats: surrogate parents and as parent educators, aiming to provide developmental guidance. We have a dual approach; but both are one. Our teens always have their own agenda. They are most interested in meeting their own needs, which are gigantic. One of our most difficult challenges is to move from parent-need to focus on parent's child. We understand that as we move mother along, we bring her baby along. As we help moms feel their feelings, they can recognize their baby's feeling.... that the best way to understand their toddler's fear is to understand their own fear.

Whenever a teen is in crisis, we are their referral source. Recently a pregnant girl was badly malnourished, her hair was coming out, and she had massive headaches. Six months ago she had an abortion. Addressing this child's needs took me 2 hours. These crises make our work very episodic.

A large proportion of our teen moms themselves are neglected kids, with minimal spontaneity, lots of anger, and no experience in positive play. We ask ourselves, "How can I help these teens experience joy in

their child?" There is so much anger in the family, they start screaming at each other. And they get real depressed, because they never have been able to convey when they needed to express. So we talk a lot about what did you really want to say; and talk about different ways of being able to say it.

During action team discussions, parent educators identified additional challenges:

- Families living in chaos
- Unmotivated parents
- Directive parents
- Conflicted extended families
- Depressed parents
- Families having many children present during the visit
- Families having many external problems (e.g., lack of adequate housing or income)
- Parents who are substance abusers
- Over-extended, over-burdened parents

Repeatedly we confronted large obstacles when working with families whose multiple complex problems often were a part of the quality of the larger social environment, e.g., unemployment, neighborhood with a high incidence of crime. In these situations, we were reminded of Heather Weiss's argument that home visiting is a "necessary but not sufficient" service for at-risk families with multiple problems.

IMPACT ON FAMILIES

We have used multiple methods involving multiple project participants to assess project impact. The action researcher/facilitator, Carol S. Klass, interviewed a sample of 30 parents at the end of the first, second, and third year. We asked parents to complete written, short-answer evaluation questionnaires (see Appendix C.3). Klass also interviewed four project parent educators. In addition, we utilized a portion of our twice-a-month action research team meeting to identify changes among parents and the parent educators themselves, changes that parent educators thought had emerged from the project.

Parents' Written Evaluation Comments

Approximately 50 percent of the 30 parents completed a brief evaluation questionnaire (see Appendix C.3). All parents expressed positive comments about the project. Given the focus of this project, not surprisingly, the most common theme involved **parents learning to promote their child's language and early literacy.**

> *Mimi (30 mos.) talks more because of what we do on the home visits. She talks to me more; and I spend more time trying to work with all the kids. She still won't let me read to her, but I keep trying.*
>
> *The books have helped. Vicky (26 mos.) goes through the books and tells me what they (the pictures) are and makes up stories.*
>
> *I learned to listen to what Robbie (23 mos.) says. It use to be, "Boy get away from me!" when I couldn't understand him. Now I try harder to understand what he wants.*
>
> *I still don't like to read. I read to him now though; and I used to not read at all. He picks up a book and brings it to me.*
>
> *I used to just ask Eddie (35 mos.) questions that he couldn't answer, or the answer was yes or no. I got helpful suggests to encourage Eddie's language. Now he talks about everything.*

Another common theme involved **parents learning to be patient and to engage more actively in activities with their children.**

> *I'm more patient. I'm more knowledgeable of how important the little things are.*
>
> *The program reminded me to stop everything and play with my baby.*
>
> *I take more time, pause a little, and let Andy (24 mos.) figure it out himself first.*
>
> *[It helped me to have] more patience, to play more, and to know how to relate more without yelling and without feeling like I gotta pop them.*
>
> *I'm developing more patience. I spank less. I try different tactics. Now I pack up all the kids and go to the Science Center, the zoo, or the park. Now I talk to them more, show them things, and ask them things.*

In summary, among the array of responses to the evaluation questionnaire, parents expressed the following themes regarding their view of project impact. First, they thought they were spending more time in activities with their children. Second, they thought they were more patient and gave their children more time. Third, they developed less punitive discipline practices. And fourth, they thought their children were more interested in books and improved in their speaking ability. The issue of language improvement is complex, for the children's increased age automatically triggers increased language skill. However, the project children in a good proportion of families had older siblings, who in fact, had language immaturities or delays when two-to-four years old. Hence, we suspect that some of the project children's language skill is related to project happenings.

Parent Interviews

At the end of each project year, the facilitator interviewed thirty project parents representing different ages, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. These parents included teen mothers, blue collar and middle class mothers and fathers, black and caucasian, teens in high school, high school graduates, and one mother teaching at a local state university.

As mentioned, the relationship between parent and parent educator is at the core of the PAT process. This relationship evolves over time from extended interactions. Central to the relationship is trust in the parent educator, the parent educator's genuineness, caring, and concern. Parents described their parent educators.

> **Jean:** *"Lela is very friendly, knowledgeable, helpful, a friend who comes to your house to talk to you, to interact with your child, and to teach you how to interact with your child. Lela explains the different developmental stages and what the children will be going through at certain stages so that you can have more of an understanding and can help that stage go on through. And a lot of times you just don't know what to do with that child during the day. She's been very helpful, very helpful."*

> **David (garage mechanic):** *"Warm and friendly. And being able to sit down with our child, and do that kind of stuff, it's just been a big help to everyone involved."*

This personal relationship between parent and parent educator was the context for improved language development among the children and increased parents' understanding of

their child's development and skill in interacting with their child. Parents discussed how Boxes for Babes has influenced their parenting:

> "Cynthia helped me learn how to deal with the different ways of doing things you know, like if Willie (24 mos.) is real bad, you know, climbing on tables, jumping off. I don't want to spank him. The best thing is Willie's time out. When he's bad, he's gotta sit in that chair. But he don't stay there for me, so I put him in his room. And that works. I don't think if I would not have been in Boxes for Babes and Even Start, I don't think I would be as good of a parent as I am now. I think I am a better parent because I have been in the program. ...I used to think I was bad, and couldn't do it. I could never raise a child. And just being in the program I think I am as good as any parent in there, maybe even better than some."

Sally was in and out of juvenile detention throughout her adolescence and never got more than an eighth grade education. She entered the Boxes for Babes project in the fall of 1992 and Even Start in the fall of 1993. Being a slow learner, coming from a troubled family, and having a difficult adolescence, Sally has gained remarkable strength from Boxes for Babes and Even Start. Sally expresses self-confidence in her parenting, a self-confidence that she had not experienced prior to her project enrollment.

> "Before, when I was pregnant, I always thought, I won't like my baby, and I'd feel sad about having Karie (9 mos.). Denise and Katie helped me feel better about it. And with the boxes, I see how much Karie is learning and stuff. The program teaches my baby a lot of stuff. And it teaches you a lot about what she's about. And how she reacts to stuff and how she is. I know I wouldn't have felt as good about Karie if I hadn't been in the program".

Like Sally, Cindy, age 16, lived in a troubled family. Her father had been involved in selling drugs and has been arrested several times. A lot of nieces and nephews, whom Cindy refers to as her brothers and sisters live at her parents home while their parents are in rehabilitation programs. Cindy attempted suicide at age nine, and has been treated for depression. For the first time in her life, Cindy feels she has a support system. With support and nurturance, Cindy is able to enjoy her baby. Her parent educators report that she has also increasingly learned to be an active participant in her baby's play.

> "The activities are the best part of Boxes for Babes. Denise and Katie give me a different Box each month. When DeMetrius (18 mos.) and I sit down and work together, I let him, he knows how to take the toys out of the box. And I just sit down and watch him. And I write down the things to see how he is observing the toys and see if he knows what to do with them."

In contrast to Sally and Cindy, LaToya, age 17, has a close relationship with her mother, age 32. Her mother is active in community services. Though LaToya's mother also was a teen parent, she highly values education and is supporting

LaToya's continued work in high school. A child herself, LaToya has learned to observe her son and experience pleasure in his accomplishments.

> "I don't get as frustrated knowing that my children go through this, and all parents are going to go through these. And my child is not bad--it's just a stage. And I'm learning how to deal with those stages. And I don't compare my second child with my first, for I've learned that all children are different, and they develop at different stages; and they're going to be different. I've learned to realize that my children are individuals, they are little people. They've got feelings."

Just as Jean feels her parent educator's respect, so too she has learned to respect her two small children. With increased understanding of child development, Jean has learned that changes in her children's behavior often reflect a developmental stage, and are not a reflection of being "bad."

IMPACT ON THE PROJECT

Project Team Meetings

Project staff identified project impact in two ways. First, individual parent educators wrote brief vignettes describing qualitative changes in their families. Second, during the last semester of the project, we structured a portion of each team meeting for project staff to identify and discuss what they saw as project impact both on the families and on their own professional understanding and competence. In team meetings, project staff continually evaluated specific components of the Boxes for Babes project and identified the following areas of project impact.

Baby Biographies: During each monthly visit, parent educators wrote down parents' descriptions of their child's new strides in development and behavior. The parent educator then gave this written "baby biography" to the parents to keep in the their baby biography folder. As parents reported monthly on the changes in their child's behavior, their negative descriptions decreased and observation skills increased significantly.

Boxes of toys, book, and activity suggestions: During the month that families had the boxes, the parents' level of involvement in play seemed somewhat dependent on the toys included in the box. Blocks and dishes invited the most amount of parent play and accompanying interaction. For all families, books were very popular and stimulated frequent parent-child interaction and early literacy. Interestingly, parents did not seem comfortable using the fingerplays.

Parent educators agreed that the concrete specific activity suggestions written in simple language, to be used with toys in the box, was very helpful for many parents, especially developmentally slow parents, teen parents, and over-burdened, over-extended parents. Further, they themselves found the specific nature of activities a help to themselves, especially when they were working with slow parents.

Single parent support group: The parent educator who co-led the single parent support group noted that she learned much about the complexities of her parents' troubles that she was not able to perceive in her brief, multi-pronged monthly home visits. After discussing these support group meetings, the team agreed that building these group meetings into the larger PAT program would both assist parents and inform parent educators.

Small steps toward positive involvement of high-risk babies and parents

Team meetings assisted parent educators in identifying small positive changes among their at-risk parents, changes that helped motivate the parent educator's persistence in working with these families. Cynthia's poignant vignette is illustrative:

> *Mom slumps on the couch. Her head is nodding and eyes drooping. It's hard to stay awake. She worked all night and stayed up until I came at nine. "He's not talking good. I don't know what it is, but none of my kids talked too good. He's almost two now, and he don't say nothing but mama." The little boy looked at me expressionless. I gave him a book. He took it, and then dropped it. He wandered over to the TV to watch it. I picked the book up and started talking about the bear. He came back over and looked at me, and then the picture of the bear. I growled. He stared some more. I growled again. Finally the hint of a smile. He looked over at mom. She was barely awake on the couch and didn't respond. I showed him the bear again and growled. He growled back then; and I clapped and clapped for him. Then we both laughed and looked at the book some more. Mom looked up.*

"He's never liked books before. Just tears 'em up." I gave him the book to take to mom. She put him on her lap and opened it up. When I left, they both were growling.

Professional growth among team members: Team members all agreed that the team meetings had provided a context for developing new understandings of both themselves and their work with families. Meetings were a safe setting, similar to supervisory sessions, where individuals shared their difficulties with specific families and their own feelings, including feelings of being overwhelmed and discouraged. As the team reflected on these issues, we gained new understandings and brainstormed new strategies to assist parent educators. In turn, individuals felt empathic support, support that empowered them to continue with challenging families.

Frequently parent educators shared their work with the same family, so that the team developed increasing depth of understanding of specific families' patterns of interacting and difficulties. In extended discussions of these families and the parent educator's challenges, team members developed increased understanding of developmental issues, parenting issues, and parent educator strategies.

Discussions of parent-child relationships and parent-parent educator relationships triggered *new awareness of how this relationship is the linchpin of the entire home visiting process.* As a result of extended discussions of patterns of parent-child interaction (the core of relationship), this topic has been integrated into the district's weekly training sessions for all parent educators.

Through team brainstorming individual parent educators developed *new understanding and skill in working with challenging parents*, e.g., bringing in suggested open-ended activity materials to break into a parent's directive style, identifying when a child's behavior points to a potential special need, identifying when a mother is depressed and in need of a referral to a therapist, etc. Similarly, team members often could provide helpful suggestions in the challenging task of having more than one young child in the home visit.

Parent educators reported *increased understanding of the subtleties of child development.* These understandings emerged from our discussion of the possible meaning and purpose of observed child action and development. As the team processed ongoing happenings within home visits, parent educators also gained *new understanding of their*

parents, understanding that often led to sharpening their observation skills. For example, parent educators began noticing those parents who never engage in motherese with their child, those parents whose own language is severely limited, those parents who did not give eye contact. Discussions were especially helpful in understanding the teen population, which was the most at-risk of our project families. For example, parent educators began to understand that for some of their teens, their first experience in spontaneous adult-child conversation was with their parent educators.

The Action Research Team

Action research has been an integral component of the Boxes for Babes Project. We met twice a month to reflect collaboratively on project happenings, and based on this reflection, plan adaptations to improve our practice. This collaboration strengthens our effort in several ways:

- Collaboration *removes the isolation* implicit in the parent educator's individual work.
- As our team discusses together ongoing project happenings, collaboration capitalizes on the *range and diversity* of the action research team members' experience and expertise.
- As colleagues involved in the same effort, we provide *support* for each other, listen to each other's difficult cases, and exchange ideas and methods.
- As meetings become the context to share difficult cases, parent educators increasingly feel *safe to admit limitations and explicitly seek help* — e.g., "What do I do with the older siblings! They're driving me crazy; always interrupting. ...When I come, his mother leaves the room....I can't seem to get her to understand that she's a central player."

The Action Researcher/Facilitator

The action researcher/facilitator aims to promote increased self and collaborative reflection of team members, and accompanying improved practice. Interviews with project team members by an outside researcher portray some dynamics of the role of the action researcher:

She [the facilitator] listens, guides, pulls out important points, and helps by probing each of us. She expands our thinking; and helps us have the freedom to have alternative ways of thinking of things. She encourages us to be open. No one is put down; and everyone feels security in the meetings...to b rainstorm. ...It is okay to say whatever you want to. Sometimes she expands on ideas of what one says, and invites others to expand on that idea. She has brought out different aspects. We look with a micro lens. She allows us to -- a higher level, a new lens to look at different things. She has validated what I do. What I do is important. Yes, it is a frustrating job. I'm reinforced in what I believe in. She expands our thinking. We become more defined, and look at things more closely -- look for smaller cues that mother or baby uses -- like eye contact when feeding -- recognize the baby is communicating. I focus on that more. Zeroing in on the ***interaction process*** *— how the baby is trying to get mom's attention. She's helped us to focus more on relationship. She's opened our eyes to a lot of things. She allows free thinking; and comes in with new ideas. And her notes from our meetings — we're able to look back and process individually, to think about different things people have said, and how you could implement. It helps you reinforce what actually went on--so you can do something with that information.*

Teen Parent Educator

Her role is as a change agent -- doing the research yet supporting the process of program development. Not only gathering research data, but making things happen. She is able to identify with the people involved, and helps ***thinking*** *occur. She invites feelings and ideas, and is supportive of cases brought forward. She really listens to what the staff is saying. It is important for an* ***outside*** *person to really be truly involved. It always helps, means so much, someone from the outside. Research is process oriented, gathering data and promoting changes, and supporting change — growth of the staff, seeing alternatives, and receiving other ideas — also helps staff recognize problems, for example, parents not showing affect. Opening their eyes to see new things. Pointing out what they are doing, supporting them — not merely imparting information.*

Director of Early Education

CONCLUSION

The Boxes for Babes Project was a two-year extension of the Missouri Parents as Teachers Program. Project team members experienced the program as offering substantive assistance to themselves — assistance in providing tangible materials and concrete guidelines for their most challenging families, and assistance in their own professional development. Given the increased frequency of visits and parent educator's increased focus — specifically on parent-child interaction and language/communication — parent educators also experienced greater success in promoting both parent and child development. All parent educators had a minimum of five years experience in the program. They reported seeing greater gains with at-risk families as a result of the Boxes for Babes intervention program.

It is not possible to pull apart completely the influence of action research from the influence of project components, for the action research rippled through all components of the project. At the same time, however, we understand that action research was a powerful tool in several areas. First, the team meetings offered parent educators a safe context to process difficulties they were experiencing, uncertainties, and feelings of hopelessness and discouragement, and were able to obtain support, suggestions, and new understandings of their work. Second, this process was a powerful tool for improved self understanding and professional development. Third, because the action researcher/facilitator was an experienced developmentalist coming from outside PAT, she offered a fresh lens to interpret project happenings and occasionally could expand the project staff's lens. Fourth, all project team members became more self-reflective of their everyday work with families. And fifth, the staff developed skills in collaboration and joint problem solving.

Reaching Out and Making a Difference: Mentors at the Gompers Fine Arts Option School

By:
Dr. Elizabeth Allen
Dr. Blondean Davis with
The Gompers Fine Arts Option School Action Research Team

Two years ago, Gompers Fine Arts Option School issued an invitation to twenty-four African-American professional men in the community to become involved with molding the futures of the youth in the West Pullman community. Ten men responded to the initial invitation. Our mentoring group expanded in the second year to include eighteen men and two women. We needed to present positive role models for our children to raise their self-esteem, to motivate, to model and/or reinforce positive values, to provide information on career choices and preparation, and to give hope. We called upon our mentors to affirm their commitment to the future of our children because ...

The Best Black Doctor has not yet
entered the operating arena,
The Best Black Lawyer is not yet
engaged in litigation
The Best Black Orator has not yet
stepped to the podium

School and Community Context

The Gompers Fine Arts Option School, named after the American labor leader, is located on Chicago's far southside. The school serves children from the fourth through the eighth grades. All the 552 children enrolled during the 1991-93 school years are of African-American descent, and 78.1% are from low-income families. Student mobility rate was estimated at 19.3%. On an average day, 94.2% of the student body is in attendance.

The Gompers school was built in 1929. It is a well-built school structure of brick with two floors. The first and second levels are made up of 21 adequate size classrooms, one well-equipped library, a counselor's office room, a front office entrance with two storage rooms,

a principal's office, a large auditorium with offices, a gymnastics room and a lunchroom. As a result of the mentoring program, a new, modern lunchroom cafeteria was constructed that officially opened for use in the Fall of 1994. The school staff consists of the principal, the vice-principal, 23 regular classroom teachers, one counselor, three special education teachers, three Chapter 1 teachers, four teacher assistants, and five custodial staff.

Gompers Fine Arts School is surrounded by single family bungalow homes, and some two- and three-flat apartment buildings. The area consisted of middle class families of European descent up until about 25-30 years ago. These families moved farther south into the suburban communities and African Americans of middle class status moved in. Soon after that, this group of African Americans moved and lower income families currently make up the population surrounding the school.

The community consists of family dwelling units with its people as its main resource. The people commute to other areas of the city to earn a living or to seek employment.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Creation of the Action Research Team

The Action Research Team consists of the school principal, IRE facilitator, three teachers, and two parents. At the outset of the project, our concept of research was an isolated activity, conducted within ivory towers by scholars, for the benefit of the few. The results would then be utilized primarily as a basis for further research, thus continuing the cycle. We were comfortable with this approach. We were now being asked to validate while in *process*, to investigate and determine the parameters of the program, and to analyze simultaneously. In addition, action research involved a team approach to development, implementation, and analysis.

Our action research group, though skeptical about the research component, was firmly committed to the development of a strong mentorship program and a parent partnership with an educational component. This commitment gave us the impetus we needed to persevere, while developing a "team consciousness." We also had the added advantage of immediate success. Nothing galvanizes a group like success. Our mentor program became a focal point in the school. The men in the initial group were dedicated, structured, and

creative. This did not, however, give the "team" the challenge that we needed. We needed a challenge in order to attack a problem proactively and synergistically.

What Do We Want Our Mentoring Program to Achieve?

To help us identify the most important challenges, the team focused initial and on-going discussions on the following questions:

- What do we want our mentoring program to achieve?
- Which strategies do we want to try first?
- How will we know whether these strategies are working?
- How will we share information about what we learned?

We used these questions as a guide for the work of the action research team in order to help us initiate activities that are based on real rather than perceived needs of children and families, create a process where we learn from our mistakes, and eliminate duplication of effort.

The challenge we set for ourselves was to create a mentoring program that increased student achievement. We wanted to develop a program that demonstrated to others outside of our community (e.g. superintendents and other principals) that community involvement was not an add-on but actually something that could help students do better in school. But as the action research team met, we began to discuss the other kinds of changes we were interested in measuring that might not be reflected in test scores.

We then established the following goals and objectives for the first years of the project:

- ***to establish the basis for a working partnership between teachers and mentors that will increase the participation of all students in their regular classroom activities;***
- ***to enhance students' motivation to learn;***
- ***to provide appropriate role models in building positive and constructive self-esteem and self-worth; and***
- ***to encourage students to think about future vocations and assist in setting career goals.***

Early in the project, we identified strategies for operationalizing our goals and came up with the following list of objectives for the first year of the program.

- ***Mentors spend time in one-on-one tutoring with students in the 7th and 8th grade clusters;***
- ***Mentors provide these students with "hands-on experience" in the world of work through field trips and discussion;***
- ***Mentors offer support and guidance about real life situations through group counseling sessions; and***
- ***Mentors work to improve critical thinking skills through activities and games.***

Our interest in getting multiple perspectives on the kinds of strategies which work best led to two important program developments.

A. Development of mentor, teacher, student questionnaires

Early in the Fall of 1990, three questionnaires for mentors, students, and teachers were developed by the staff at the Institute For Responsive Education (IRE) and a part-time project facilitator. The questionnaires were developed in order to assist the Action Research Team in getting multiple and changing perspectives on the impact of the program (see Appendix D for full questionnaires).

A common set of questionnaires was asked of mentors, students, and teachers. Student and teacher respondents were asked to describe the program, give an example of what the mentor did in the classroom, offer suggestions for the future, and identify changes in students' behavior and academic performance. The mentors were asked to comment on what prompted them to become a mentor and what their experiences were like in the classroom, and to describe students' responses to their work.

The questionnaire was administered at the beginning and at the end of the 1991-92 and the 1992-93 school years. The facilitator administered and compiled the surveys.

The questionnaires were administered to a random sample of fifty to sixty students, eighteen mentors, and three teachers over a two-year period. Eighteen mentors responded to questionnaires the first year and then the same group plus two new mentors answered it the following year. The three same teachers in the 7th and 8th grade cluster (those who had

mentors in their classrooms) responded to the questionnaires over the same time period.

The facilitator compiled the data twice yearly into a report for the Action Research team, which then used the information to make changes in the program. Feedback from the questionnaires were also given to IRE and they used the information as part of their cross-site analysis. The information from the Facilitator and the Action Research Team and from IRE was shared with parents, teachers, and district and local school administrators. This process was organized and directed by the Action Research Team.

B. On-going mentors meeting

We held ongoing meetings with mentors to discuss experiences they were having with the students and the faculty. The mentors met monthly in the school library, usually from 8:00 AM until 10:00 AM. The group discussed what was working in the Program, what was not working, and what needed modification. Some of the modifications that were direct results of the meetings were to decrease the size of student groups, to create more visual aids for the students, to select outside speakers who had expertise in the topic to be discussed, and to take more field trips.

Sharing What We Have Learned

Our mentors have assisted us in our mission "to educate every child to be an academically successful student, a socially responsible citizen, and a life-long learner... by teaching the necessary knowledge and skills and the appreciation of cultural diversity, within our school that fosters excellence, mutual respect, creativity, and the joy of learning."

To get an accurate picture of mentors' role, we asked students — those with firsthand knowledge of the program — to describe mentors' activities inside and outside of the classroom. From their responses, we developed this composite picture.

In the classroom, mentors:

- TEACH US how to love and respect others, the importance of being on time every day, how to study and conduct ourselves at home, job skills, and how to conduct ourselves when we grow up;

- LISTEN to us when we are upset or excited about something in our lives... when we are at trouble at school or afraid about something or are nervous or lonely; and

- GUIDE us and help us think about our problems in a new way.

As part of our school, mentors:

- SPONSOR tutoring programs, field trips, and demonstrations;

- RAISE funds for the United Negro College fund, our new lunchroom, and library resources;

- LEAD special workshops on alternatives to gangs, personal growth, and entrepreneurship; and

- PARTICIPATE in our school Parent Partnership program.

Students and teachers also helped us identify the characteristics of an effective mentor. We have used these principles to create a training guide for future mentors at our school and other schools starting mentoring programs.

Characteristics of Effective Mentors

- patient and uses restraint, avoids physical contact;
- engage in positive relationships;
- have a positive self-image;
- react to stressful situations in a positive way;
- tolerate stressful situations;
- communicate on a level of understanding;
- stable;
- respect alternative lifestyles;
- care about helping the needy child;
- committed;
- willing to serve a minimum of one year;
- meet on a weekly basis;
- nurturing;
- not judgmental;
- honest with realistic expectations; and
- being advocates for the school and its programs.

Effective Mentoring Can:

- empower by the expansion of visions, hopes, and opportunities;
- influence students to become the best possible citizens;
- result in producers as opposed to users; and
- allow the self-fulfilled, self-actualized person to emerge.

The characteristics of an effective mentor are infinite. Gompers Fine Arts School views this process as a life-long developmental and conditioning process. We shall always be indebted to the mentors who volunteered their talents, time and service to make it all happen. Their reward will be a positive impact on their future as well as the students and parent.

KEY EVENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTORING PROGRAM

In the fall of 1990, an invitation was extended to professional men in the community and vicinity to become involved in the school as mentors. Principal Blondean Davis wrote a personal letter describing her vision of providing children in her school with role models. The letter was sent to business, church, and community leaders and to politicians. Seventeen male mentors volunteered.

In the first year of the program, the mentors sponsored grade-level sessions twice a month. The meetings were held in the library and in the auditorium. The girls met in the auditorium and were organized by grade levels in two sessions: the first session included all 4th through 6th graders, the second session included all 7th and 8th graders. The male students met in the library and were grouped in the same way. These were intended to be empowerment sessions. Topics included alternatives to gangs, study skills, grooming and healthy living, the political system and how it works, career opportunities, relating to others with dignity and respect, what it means to be part of community, and staying in school.

Mentors Begin Community Outreach

In the spring of 1991, mentors expanded their role to one of community outreach. Because of observation and discussion with students, teachers, and other mentors, mentors recognized the need to have students work with and in the community surrounding the school. They planned and implemented field trips to inspire, to stimulate critical thinking, and to teach by example. Trips included visits to city hall to observe government in action, to the county jail to acquire firsthand knowledge of prison life, and to the news stations and TV stations and libraries to expose pupils to sources of information and how to use community facilities. Mentors also took individual children on trips such as out to lunch and the shopping mall.

Mentors Become Active in Parent Partnership Program

In the fall of 1992, the Parent Partnership program brought teachers, parents, teacher aides, school staff, and mentors together in an unstructured educational setting. The Parent Partnership met on the last Tuesday evening of every month. It provided opportunities for parents, teachers, mentors, and others to come together to discuss and interact on specific topics pertaining to school. Some of the topics that were covered included pro-active discipline and the teaching of values, the meaning of good citizenship, the appreciation of art and literature, and the use of community resources, such as the library, churches, and social service agencies.

This interaction was based around the belief that collaboration would help to create more learning opportunities for everyone in the school community and that sharing experiences in a different setting away from the school environment would allow all to participate more comfortably. Parents viewed this as an opportunity to be actively involved with their children's teachers in a more relaxed setting. Mentors viewed the setting as an opportunity to get to know parents and to dialogue on educational issues and concerns. Teachers saw the meetings as an opportunity to discuss and collaborate on classroom activities and get to know the parents and mentors.

Mentors Begin Adopt-One-Save-One Program

In December of 1992, the mentors began a new project that was focused on all 8th grade students who had one or more failing grades on their report cards (total number 15). These failures placed the students in an "at-risk" category for year-end success and possibly graduation. A series of workshops were designed. On January 16, 1993, a workshop with mentors, parents, and school personnel was held to map out strategies and assess approaches that would rescue the students "at-risk." The workshop presenter was the Institute's on-site facilitator, Dr. Elizabeth J. Allen. Dr. Allen defined the term "at-risk" and then shared successful strategies that might be helpful. At the end of the workshop, Dr. Blondean Y. Davis, principal, assigned a mentor to each student and parents of the student. The presence of the parents and mentors provided opportunities for them to confer on student needs and to formulate a joint plan to address those needs. The mentors began their contacts with students in the days and weeks following the training session. Each mentor's approach to the student and his/her family was unique. Some mentors provided tutors, some counseled, some met with student and family in the home setting. All of the mentors made phone calls, made follow-up visits and follow-up phone calls, and talked with the students frequently.

Joint Mentors Action Research Team

Throughout most of the project, the Action Research Team met separately from the mentors group. However, as the role of mentors deepened within the classroom and throughout the school, the need for coordination became apparent. In the fall of 1993, the decision was made to include mentors in the meetings. These meetings became the place where mentors and teachers shared strategies on topics such as tips for improving classroom interaction, strategies for self-worth development and building self-esteem, approaches to address career counseling, and effective ways to address discipline, school attendance and tardiness.

PROGRAM IMPACT

We wanted our mentoring program to make a significant difference in the academic progress and social development of children at our school. By providing children with African-American male role models, we hoped to boost our students' self-esteem. Our assumption was that increases in self-esteem and sense of self-worth would lead to improvements in learning.

One of the most important things that we have learned is that children need much more than a high regard for themselves to do well at school. There are other conditions which have an important impact on children's learning. In order to do better in school:

- children need to feel that their actions can have a potentially positive or negative impact on the larger communities (peer group, race/ethnic group, family, neighborhood) of which they are a part and from which they learn; and
- children need to feel that adults within these communities care about them and are willing to support their learning in ways students themselves believe to be important.

In questionnaires, interviews, and our own observations, we have identified important changes in conditions for learning for students at the Gompers. We discuss these changes under five categories.

Sense of history: A need to be knowledgeable about and have a deep sense of awareness of who he/she really is, through the history of his/her ancestors.

Connectedness: This results when a child gains satisfaction from associations that are significant to the child and the importance of those associations has been affirmed by others.

Uniqueness: This occurs when a child can acknowledge and respect the qualities or attributes that make him or her special and different, and when that child receives respect and approval from others for those qualities.

Power: Having the resources, opportunity, and capability to influence the circumstances of his or her own life in important ways.

***Models*:** These reflect a child's ability to refer to adequate human, philosophical, and operational examples that help him or her establish meaningful values, goals, ideals, and personal standards.

Sense of History

Among students participating in the program, we have witnessed students' growing understanding and appreciation of their cultural and racial heritage. Accomplishments that were once associated with white majority culture are now understood to be part of their racial heritage. Students, who were mentored by a historian, explain:

> *"He told us about our heritage, that Lewis Latimer was the real inventor of the lightbulb."*

> *"He tells us that we're ancient Egyptians and I say we are Africans. I think we are both-Egyptians and Africans and I think we are both famous."*

There is a growing understanding of ways that African-Americans have been oppressed and, with this understanding, a sense of responsibility for preventing that oppression from continuing in the future.

> *"He teaches us the real past and tells us what we should do to change it and make it better."*

Teachers and mentors concur with students that the mentoring program has brought issues of race to the forefront of students' learning. One teacher talks about students delving into feelings and attitudes about black pride.

> *"I gave writing assignments and directed classroom debates that encouraged students to explore their feelings about their racial identity."*

Mentors talk about students being more in touch with race.

> *"I tried to instill in the kids a sense of accountability to one's self and to one's people."*

Connectedness

Students, teachers, and mentors describe students/themselves as having more positive, intentional interactions with friends and family around their learning experiences. Students have begun to talk to parents about what they are doing in school. As one student related,

> *"I told my Mom what I learned about the inventions by Black people, we talked about famous Blacks in the news, and lately we watch the news together."*

Students are guides/supporters to friends and family around their own learning and career goals. For example, these students wrote,

> *"I am showing others in my class more respect, I help them with their work when I finish with my own work."*
>
> *"I told my sister about the days when our ancestors were alive and what they did, I wanted to share my new information."*

Uniqueness

As a result of the mentoring program, students report that they have better understanding and appreciation of what makes them unique. For students, the evidence is not only in an overall improved sense of well-being but also the responses of friends and families to their ideas and work.

As stated in the examples that follow, students feel better about themselves inside and outside of school.

> *"When I tell people about what my ancestors have done, I feel respected and important."*
>
> *"I am inspired to read more and to know just where it was coming from, he (the mentor) made me want a better future."*

Students noticed that their friends and families are more interested in information that they have to share. Also, along with the students' own personal observations, teachers observed changes in students' comfort in talking about themselves (in journals, essays). They were

more comfortable and proud of what set them apart from others. For many students it became cool to do well in school and honor each other.

Power

With a growing sense of uniqueness comes a sense of power and control over their lives and interactions with others. Students treat friends and family with more respect and "the way they want to be treated."

> *"I encouraged my mother to try for a new job, and she passed her test."*

Students solve problems differently with more emphasis on understanding issues at hand. They have a clearer sense of what they want to do with their lives. One student revealed,

> *"Because of our mentor I started thinking more about my life when I grow up and what I want to be — a lawyer."*

Teachers and mentors also note that students seem to exhibit more of an interest in their future and a growing sense of responsibility for making decisions. Teachers and mentors point to students' increased sense of power over their learning as a result of changed approaches to learning. For example, there was a greater openness to trying new things and a willingness to be a part of cooperative learning approaches.

Models

Students are more aware and/or more able to utilize the caring adults in their lives. Students ask mentors for advice when they need it. This student identified some of the ways she appreciated her mentor,

> *"He helps us figure out our problems and answers our questions. We do better when he's around."*

Students feel cared for and safer in the school. For instance, these students said,

> *"I know our mentor doesn't want me to be in a gang or on drugs, he tells me to be successful."*
>
> *"He shows the students how much he wants them to accomplish their goals, and he helps them realize that they are not alone."*

Teachers and mentors find that students have gained an awareness of the importance of models in their life. They recognize this change in their willingness to participate in career programs, their attitudes toward mentors, and their interaction with mentors.

In addition to open-ended questions, students and teachers were asked to assess progress in the following areas: homework completion, attendance in school, helping others, feeling respect and pride, career goals, behavior and grades. Students perceived the mentoring program as having little impact on their behavior in school and on academic performance, albeit teachers noted that the program had a positive influence on students' helping relationship with others. These responses provide additional evidence that the earliest impact of the mentoring program was on conditions for learning.

Activity	92-93 (n=50 out of 120 students total)	93-94 (n=67 out of 120 students total)	% Change
a. do homework more	50%	40%	-10%
b. attend school more	38%	39%	+1%
c. help others	60%	57%	-3%
d. feel respect/pride	56%	66%	+10%
e. have career goals	50%	68%	+18%
f. improved behavior	50%	37%	-13%
g. get better grades	58%	52%	-6%

Unexpected Results

The work of the mentors at our school has had an unexpected impact on teaching practices and community members' relationship to the school. Teachers report that as a result of the mentoring program, they have developed instructional approaches more fully grounded in the realities of students' lives and heritages.

> *"We conduct more discussions centering around the importance of Black Pride."*
>
> *"I gave students an assignment to critique a Social Studies book which gives scant attention to African American history."*
>
> *"I asked students to do research on famous Black inventors."*

Having an opportunity to work with another adult in their classroom has triggered teachers' interest in cooperative experiential approaches to learning:

> *"I use the buddy system now for most every assignment. Working as a team with the mentor was what made me try this."*
>
> *"We organized a debate in which students posed questions to political candidates."*
>
> *"I asked students to develop their own personal expense budget for the summer to develop problem-solving skills."*

Mentors report that as a result of their participation in the mentoring program, their investment in the school has increased. Mentors, who early in program displayed shock at students' "bad behavior," now see students as part of their family and as having a sense of responsibility in their future.

> *" I am their uncle, father, minister all in one. And sometimes, one for all."*
>
> *"Being part of this program has given me a sense of urgency to put my money and my time where my mouth is. These children are my children's future."*

Recommendations for the Future

As part of our action research, we asked students, mentors and teachers to identify some of the things that they thought the mentoring program should do differently. We have integrated a number of their most common concerns into our action plan for next year.

Recommendation #1. Plan more activities for mentors and students to do outside of school. Students told us that while they liked having mentors work with them in the classroom, they wanted to be able to do more things with mentors in the community.

> *"I suggest that the mentors take us to different places outside of the school on field trips and picnics and sports events."*
>
> *"Mentors should take us out experiencing and not just in the classroom because that gets boring."*

Teachers concurred with students and strongly suggested that mentors interact more directly with students' parents through home visits.

RECOMMENDATION #2. Encourage mentors to visit school more frequently and consistently. In general, mentors are spending an average of three hours a week at the school. Students and teachers told us that more time and a more consistent schedule is needed:

As one student explains,

> *"I would like our mentor to come more times a week. It is too long in between when we see him."*

A teacher agrees:

> *"We should have mentors come and spend more time with the class as a whole and individually." But she cautioned, "we need mentors to come on a regular basis."*

And another,

> *"We need mentors who will dedicate themselves throughout the school year."*

Recommendation #3. Increase the time mentors spend working one-on-one with students. Students were excited about having another adult in the room and wanted to be able to spend more time alone with him/her talking about or working on things that students felt were important.

> *"I would like to be able to talk to my mentor privately."*
>
> *"I want him to give me advice on how to set better goals for myself and keep my mind on books."*
>
> *"I want him to work more with just me on my math and spelling."*

Teachers also asked that mentors work more one-on-one with students, but primarily to address students' behavior problems.

Recommendation #4. Increase the connections between the mentoring program and regular classroom activities. While teachers responded favorably to introduction of mentors to their classrooms, they expressed concern over lack of continuity in their activities.

> *"Mentors should have a lesson plan — or better discuss with me beforehand what they want to do and we will integrate into mine."*
>
> *"I would suggest that mentors bring some activities into the class for the students to complete and return to him before he leaves."*

When Families Lead:
The Patrick O'Hearn School Family Outreach Project

Authored by the O'Hearn Family Outreach Project Members

"Before Family Outreach was started I was not an active parent even though I had four children at the O'Hearn. But as I became involved with the visiting I realized what a difference we made in the lives of the families we were reaching out to and how my involvement would impact my own family as well. I never before realized how much power I have in my children's education outside of the home."

Rosalind Montgomery, parent

Three years ago the principal, teachers and a handful of family members at the Patrick O'Hearn School came together to make a plan for how to increase parent involvement in the school. They began with a small core of active family members who reached out to other parents in the school community and the result is that families are now a major presence and force at the O'Hearn. This is the story of what the O'Hearn community did to open up opportunities for family involvement, how they did it, and what impact growing parent activism has had on the school's culture and classroom life. The experience at the O'Hearn is a case study in the process of empowerment and community building in an urban school and helps us understand the context that makes widespread family participation a reality and the impact of that participation on the lives of children and families.

BACKGROUND

The O'Hearn is a small elementary school with 215 students in the Dorchester section of Boston, Massachusetts serving a primarily low-income, racially diverse student population. In 1989 the new principal introduced many innovative practices, including the full inclusion of students with mild to profound special needs with their regular education peers. At that time O'Hearn teachers identified insufficient parent involvement as the main obstacle to better student achievement. In the Spring of 1991 a small group of parents established a Family

Center in the school's library and began talking about how to extend the O'Hearn's "full inclusion" policy to all families in the school community. In the Fall of 1991, they applied for and received a grant from the Institute For Responsive Education (IRE) to set up a team of parents, teachers, and the principal to design and implement a family involvement project. A top priority of the team was to reach out to families who seemed to be disengaged from their children's education. They developed a comprehensive Family Center and began home visits to families who had never come to school. A Family Outreach Group, which included about a dozen parents and grandparents who reflected the racial composition of the school population, plus the principal, was organized to oversee the project. The grant provided funds for a facilitator to work one day per week in the school to support the project.

The Family Outreach Group took part in a one-and-a-half day workshop in November 1991 which combined technical training, team building and organizational development in preparation for the home visiting effort. The workshop took place at the law offices of Goodwin, Proctor, and Hoar, the school's business partner. The workshop content highlighted the principles underlying the "Family Matters" program, developed by Moncrieff Cochran at Cornell University. These principles include the ideas that:

1) all families have some strengths;

2) valid and useful knowledge about the rearing of children is lodged among the people—across generations, in the networks, and in the historically and culturally rooted folkways of ethnic and cultural traditions;

3) a variety of family forms... could promote the development of both healthy children and healthy adults;

4) cultural differences are both valid and valuable.

(Cochran, 1987)

Participants in the workshops included a few active parents plus others who were recruited by these parents to join in launching the outreach project.

"What I remember best about our first workshop is how quickly I began to feel that I was part of a group that was going to do important work in support of our children at the O'Hearn. For me it was like meeting a new family."

Kim McLeod, parent

THE FAMILY OUTREACH PROJECT

Following the November workshop members of the Family Outreach Group started home visits to O'Hearn families. Initially, they focused on families with whom the school had little or no contact. In addition, the parents started a family newsletter and a telephone-tree, organized workshops and evening forums, and worked with teachers to put on classroom breakfasts — all with the purpose of helping families feel connected to the school and providing a wide spectrum of opportunities for family involvement. These active parents became a bridge between home and school, making it possible for other parents who had been disengaged to feel confident that the school was, in fact, a welcoming place. Families who had never been to the O'Hearn began coming to the school for the first time.

The school's twice-a-year open houses became focal points for the Family Outreach Group. They organized pizza suppers before each open house and worked hard to assist the families they were visiting to attend their child's classroom. Transportation and child care at the school site were offered.

"Over 90% of our families now meet with their child's teachers twice a year. This is a tribute to the Outreach Group and the effectiveness of the parent-to-parent relationships they have built with many of the school's families."

Dr. William Henderson, principal

"Members of our group have really worked to help families feel comfortable coming up to school. One of the nicest things to see is when parents come up for open house or some other school activity (as a result of) your contact. It has reaffirmed for me that all families want their children to be successful in the educational arena."

Gail Harris, parent

THE FAMILY OUTREACH GROUP

Since December 1991, the Family Outreach Group has met one evening each month to share their experiences about the visits, to reflect on their role and their work, and to make new plans. A core group of parents remained constant. Several parents who left the group did so either because their children graduated or the family moved. New parents have been contacted through the school's outreach and have joined efforts. Over the period of the project the size of the group grew to about 20 parents. The group was sustained over the last three years by a combination of factors, according to Outreach members. One recurring theme is that a supportive bond has been created between parents in the group:

> *"Our monthly meetings are informal and family-like. We have them in each others' homes and we all feel comfortable speaking up."*
>
> Rosalind Montgomery, parent

> *"The people in the group have become like family to me. Together we bring to other families the strength we have gained from each other."*
>
> Allie Sullivan, parent

> *"The Family Outreach project has given me an opportunity to be involved with other parents who are very concerned with their children's education, to extend support to other families and to receive support myself."*
>
> Mary Greene, parent

A second thread which runs through many parents comments is that group participation provides them with a renewed sense of energy and efficacy: they believe their input is valued and their voice counts.

> *"In 'Outreach' I know that I am an important part of making the group's decisions."*
>
> Rosalind Montgomery, parent

> "In 'Outreach' we sit down as a group and decide what we want to see happen at our school. Each of us gives our opinion about a subject and then the final decision is made by the group as one body. Through this project I have gained the knowledge of how to work with a group. I have learned how important supportive decision-making can be—it is the foundation which keeps 'Family Outreach' going."
>
> Theresa Knight, parent

Gradually, school policy issues became one focus of the group's decision-making. In the late summer of 1992, following the first year of the project, the Family Outreach Group met and decided to adopt a new policy. Beginning that fall, the family of every new child who attends the O'Hearn would receive a home visit by a member of the group to welcome them and encourage their involvement. The response to these visits was overwhelmingly positive.

Three parents comment on how their home visits led them to get involved:

"It was quite a surprise to me to be visited by a family and a very joyful thing. To think that we were being visited just because we were a new O'Hearn family! I decided from that point that I would try to make others feel welcome from the school -- knowing that there are some families who would not know even one other O'Hearn family. I attended the next Outreach meeting, and I plan to get involved."

Claire Dewey, parent

"My son, John, who has Downs Syndrome, started school at the O'Hearn in September 1992. I was a little apprehensive about John being integrated because of his special needs. I had many unanswered questions such as: Have we made the right choice for him in this setting? Will he benefit from this type of education? Will he be accepted by students, their families, and the staff? I received a visit from an Outreach worker and went over my concerns. The visit was very beneficial and the Outreach worker said, if I ever wanted to talk, to call her. The Family Outreach/Family Center people care and help connect new families to the school."

Debbie Sarno, parent

"The visit I received from one of the Family Outreach members made me feel welcomed. That's when I decided to attend one of the meetings, so I could find out more about the group. I joined Family Outreach because it made me feel like a part of creating something good. It also made me be more involved with my son and his school. The Family Outreach Group gave me the opportunity to give other families what they gave to me. I now feel like I can be a role model to help newcomers find their way in a new environment."

Andra Harris, parent

"As a new parent to the O'Hearn this year, I was unsure what to expect. I felt very welcome and comfortable from the start here. I was encouraged to participate in all the school's functions and I have become very involved."

Felicia Fields, parent

In addition to monthly meetings, members of the Family Outreach Group have held occasional Saturday workshops to reflect and strategize about the project.

"I feel as though I will never be able to give back all that I have learned through the workshops. I utilize the information with my own family and with many others."

LaJaughn Chaplin, parent

At one such gathering in January 1993 the group brainstormed improvements for how to make the home visiting more effective. Also at this time members agreed that connecting families to the school is only the first step in supporting parents' involvement in their children's education. The group discussed other important needs which they had identified through their home visits, including establishing a community resource area within the Family Center staffed by a parent advocate, setting up a family support group, promoting multicultural literacy, and planning parent empowerment workshops to enable more parents to feel confident that they can communicate with school staff as equals.

In January 1993, parents embarked on a number of new initiatives which created a sense of both excitement and challenge. Parents organized to volunteer in classrooms, a community resource network file was established to connect families to needed services and programs, a monthly school newsletter was produced and published by parents, and more and more special events such as Welcoming Breakfasts and Book Fairs were taking place. Families also organized several forums on topics concerning how to further the school's commitment to multicultural education.

At a year-end workshop, held in June 1993, Outreach members decided for the coming school year to establish an "O'Hearn Family Leadership Council" made up of the volunteer coordinators for each area of work. It was decided that in a number of cases committees would be co-coordinated by a seasoned parent leader and a newer volunteer to assure the continued infusion of new leadership into the group. Teacher representation was also sought. Monthly meetings of the Leadership Council were planned to guarantee continuous communication between parents and staff, and to plan how to further develop an inclusive environment for all the school's families.

> "I think our June workshop was helpful in terms of setting up a leadership body which will enable parents to communicate and be involved in clearly identified areas at school."
>
> Mary Greene, parent

For many members of the Outreach group and those who became involved in many other activities at the school, the group offered many different forms of support and encouragement. Some members of the group have taken steps to return to school for their own development. For other parents it has been a place where they could discuss parenting issues and voice their concerns within the O'Hearn school community.

"It has been very important for me to form friendships with other members of the leadership team this year. This more than anything has made me feel like the O'Hearn is my school."

Allie Sullivan, parent

"As a member of the family outreach committee, I have been more the recipient than the giver of consistent and kind concern during the last year... I have been most affected and positively challenged by the core group of parents who do so much outreach work. They often encouraged me to take the next step in joining with another child or parent which I might not have done but for their example."

Claire Dewey, parent

"Becoming active at the O'Hearn has meant a lot to me. It has given me a sense of empowerment, a sense that my voice makes a difference, and also the sense of being an important part of a team."

Felicia Fields, parent

THE FAMILY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Leadership Council met first during the summer of 1993 and has met regularly throughout the 1993-1994 school year. Under the leadership of two parent Council members, parents organized a full day Peace Promotion Festival at the school this Spring in which every child and teacher and a large number of family members took part. Family members also participated in a series of workshops focused on how to help children resolve conflicts at home peacefully. This year, within the Leadership Council, members of the "family outreach group" provided support for the O'Hearn's home reading program by phoning parents to encourage their participation. In addition, family members have become much more involved in school policy issues. They attend and participate in every school-based management meeting. According to Principal William Henderson, "There is a shared assumption that anytime the school takes on something significant, parents will be involved."

ASSESSING THE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

One task, which the school committed to as part of receiving the IRE grant, was to research and report on a specific aspect of the project. Initially, the team chose to study the effects of the home visiting program on the families and children that were visited. Written reports from the parent visitors, oral reports delivered at the monthly meetings, interviews with group members and visitees were collected and quantitative data chronicling the number of family members at school events was kept. During the second year of the project, the scope of the "Family Outreachers" activities substantially widened, and it became difficult to maintain consistent written reports of the visits with the limited resources available for documentation. However, interviews and notes from Outreach meetings and whole day workshops were maintained. In addition, parents and teachers were interviewed in the Spring of 1994 and student records were reviewed. The team originally assumed that the main effects of the home visiting program would be on the families to whom the group was reaching out. In fact, the impact has been far broader. Each of these areas is discussed below.

Development of Family Leadership Within the School

A crucial result of the program has been the establishment of a strong, organized group of parents who provide the school with important leadership in both programming and policy development. Some members of Family Outreach have become more involved with the school at the same time they are extending opportunities to other families. The school, in turn, has welcomed these changes and supported the development of the Leadership Council.

> *"When my sons first started at the O'Hearn the school didn't have much of a reputation in the community. Now people all over comment about how they've heard about the things happening at the O'Hearn and what a productive and unifying place it must be. It's a really good feeling to be able to say my children go to this school and that I'm a member of the parents group which is making things happen."*
>
> Kim McLeod, parent

"As a full time working parent, the Family Leadership Council has helped me make more linkages to the other parents and the school staff. In turn, I hope that I have helped other parents to feel more comfortable."

Anna Shaw-Baecker, parent

"As a member of the leadership council and the school based management team, I have felt that my voice is truly heard and that parental input is a valued commodity, not something to which mere lip service is paid."

Gail Ravgaila, parent

The families who participated in the school developed a loyalty to the school as an institution and in turn made the school more like a family.

"Before my son started at the O'Hearn I thought school volunteer work would be bake sales and fund raising. Now I know that family members can play an integral part in their children's education that goes way beyond these things. The Family Center and Outreach make the O'Hearn a really different kind of school."

Debbie Sarno, parent

"The school is really willing to let parents' creative juices flow, the staff and parents encourage you to do as much as you are able to. When parents can help shape policy then parental support follows. This is how it is at the O'Hearn."

Joanne Maranian, parent

"What I do differently from before I joined the Outreach Group is get much more involved with my grandson's teachers and his classroom. I learned that I have the right to know more."

Easter Farley, grandparent

Positive Impact on Teacher Attitudes

Another success of the program has been its impact on teachers. In a series of interviews in May of 1994, faculty members agreed that parent participation is an accepted school norm. While most teachers describe themselves as long-time advocates of parent involvement, many now view parents as partners, and are approaching family members for help in reaching out to families of children in their classrooms.

> *"Family Outreach has helped us to tie together the home/school environment for all our students, so that we can better serve the total child."*
>
> Eileen Bayer and Ellen Savage,
> Third /fourth grade teachers

> *"The Family Outreach project created a greater bond between school and family members."*
>
> Marjorie Shillingford and Nancy Gillette
> Kindergarten teachers

> *"The parent visitors helped to welcome and make our new families feel important to their children's school experience."*
>
> Laura Goldberg, Early Childhood teacher

> *"The Family Outreach has helped me see parents as leaders, they are confident. I didn't see that in other schools. They are more aware of the importance of their job as parents."*
>
> Eileen Bayer, third/fourth grade teacher

> *"I've been here a long time, over 17 years. I've never seen parents in the building like they are now. Now they are going to school themselves."*
>
> Darlene Inge, fourth/fifth teacher

These interviews suggest that teachers are changing their perception of the parent community at the O'Hearn.

Community Interest in the School

The school has become more popular, as demonstrated by parent requests through the Boston Controlled Choice Plan. The waiting lists for some grades is approaching five times that of the capacity of the school. The O'Hearn is also recognized in the community for its commitment to reach out to families and many community groups have spoken out in behalf of the school.

> *"The inclusive model that the O'Hearn has made so popular by integrating children with and without disabilities is elevated to a new level of inclusiveness with the addition of the Family Center and parents actually going into the neighborhoods to make families feel included, special and welcome."*
>
> Greater Boston Association for Retarded Citizens

> *"The O'Hearn School is recognized in the community for their leadership with family involvement. Recognizing that it does take the whole community to educate children, the O'Hearn School initiated a number of efforts to enhance the partnership between the school and home..."*
>
> Codman Square Health Center

> *"We believe that the family/community outreach work which the parents at the O'Hearn Elementary School are undertaking is a key strategy for changing the climate in the school..."*
>
> The William Monroe Trotter Institute at the
> U Massachusetts/Boston

Parent Involvement with the Larger Community

Family Outreach members are also playing leadership roles in the larger community. LaJaughn Chaplin described her involvement in helping to draft state legislation which would mandate family participation in schools, saying "I would not have taken this step had I not developed confidence in my abilities through Family Outreach." Others have participated in TV presentations and on conference panels both locally and nationally. And some members have become involved in community-wide efforts to boost parent empowerment through the Parent Involvement for Quality Education/Right Question Project Initiative.

Student Attendance and Achievement Scores

There are preliminary signs that the Family Outreach and Family Involvement program generally is having a positive impact on the academic achievement of the school's children. Dr. Henderson asserts, "Student performance has improved as demonstrated on standardized tests and on portfolios." Although it is impossible to attest to a definite cause and effect relationship, the fact is that since the school embarked on a concerted program to increase family involvement, the test scores for the school as a whole have improved significantly, and indicators of success (attendance, behavior and academic progress) for individual students who were targeted for outreach have also shown positive improvement.

Over the last three years the reading scores for 'regular education' students at the O'Hearn have risen from the 42nd percentile to the 56th percentile on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. In math the scores have increased from the 44th to the 61st percentile. According to Dr. Henderson, there are also fewer discipline problems, reflected in the decreased number of suspensions and referrals to the office.

> "Most special needs students have been meeting the goals of Individual Education Plans and the quality of the interactions among children from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and ability backgrounds has shown steady improvement."
> Dr. Henderson, principal

Individually some children have made dramatic progress both in attendance and the development of academic skills:

Allison: During the 1991-92 school year, Allison missed 72 days of school. Outreach began at the beginning of the next school year. That fall she missed 22 days of school, that spring she missed 8. Attendance is now a non-issue.

James: In 1990-1991, James missed 18 days of school and his teachers reported that he was often unable to focus on school work or follow school rules. Outreach began in 1991-1992. During that year he missed 3 days, improved markedly in reading and math, but still had difficulty completing school tasks and listening to his teachers. Over the last two years, James has continued to make steady progress in his academic work. And, his conduct is well within the school norms.

Lysa: Lysa missed 38 days of school in 1991-1992. Outreach began that spring. This year her attendance is excellent and each year teachers have reported improved social and academic skills. Teacher's report: "Lysa's past tendency to withdraw in the face of new tasks or social situations has greatly diminished. She participates fully in class activities and has made significant progress in all subject areas."

Parents have also commented on changes in children's attitudes about school:

"The circle of adults our children see who care about them is much bigger as a result of the efforts to promote family involvement."
Kathy Ryan, parent

"My children are happy and excited that I'm at their school making a contribution to their education. When I come into the school, and my children see me, it gives them a lift and makes them want to progress and excel."
Rosalind Montgomery, parent

"Personally, outreach has helped my child's relationships at the O'Hearn. She has much more confidence knowing we, as a family, are involved."
Diane Greenidge, parent

"A great many of our school activities call for parental involvement and each year we have seen an increase in participation and interest. I think this is very important to our children and it is what makes the O'Hearn so special."
Lucy Brown, parent

KEY INGREDIENTS TO SUCCESS: BUILDING COMMUNITY

Clearly, there are several ingredients which are critical to the project's achievements. One is the presence of a very strong principal whose leadership, vision and hard work inspire everyone's efforts:

"Dr. Henderson never gives parents the sense that he is up there and we're down here. He has lots of ideas about things he'd like parents to do but he's right there with us, helping to make sure they happen even though it means he often arrives at the school at 6:00 a.m."
LaJaughn Chaplin, parent

Another is the dedication of hours and hours of volunteer time and labor given by family members:

> *"It isn't chance, coincidence or magic which makes us have such an active school community. We have a sizable group of parent volunteers who work day after day, week after week reaching out and creating forums for involvement."*
>
> Allie Sullivan, parent

A third explanation comes from a close examination of the actions taken to facilitate the development of the sense of empowerment and community that has emerged at the O'Hearn. In his writing about the empowerment process, Cochran (1987) identified several key assumptions that support the process:

1. that individuals understand their own needs better than others are able to understand them;

2. that individuals should have the power both to define their own needs and to act upon them;

3. that through the empowerment process people become more able to influence those people and organizations that affect their lives and the lives of those they care about;

4. that the process should include efforts to alter the power relationships between those governed by and governing institutions on behalf of more equal distribution of power in the community as a whole.

In reviewing the history of the project at the O'Hearn, one can see an example of the empowerment process at work. From the beginning of the project, members of the Outreach group defined the goals and shaped the activities of the project. The full inclusion model of schooling was mirrored in the welcoming of diverse families into the Outreach effort. The Outreach Group defined its agenda and strategy, beginning first with home visits to families who seemed disengaged from their children's education and adding, as they decided, such projects as a newsletter, phone-tree, evening forums and various social events such as classroom breakfasts and pizza parties. Within the regular monthly meetings, members of the group were able to critically reflect on their work, assess their progress and determine new directions. Opportunities were created for the group to meet for extended periods of time and reflect on their activities and redirect their efforts if they chose. That happened in August,

1992 when the Family Outreach group decided to expand their home visiting effort to include visits to all new families. And it happened in January of 1993 when the decision was made to establish a community resource information bank staffed by a parent volunteer. Again, in June of 1993 at another Saturday retreat, the entire parent group decided to establish a Leadership Council to coordinate the many layers and wide array of family involvement activities. All decisions affecting the Family Outreach Project were made by the members of the group.

Ongoing communication was established and supported through the efforts of the project's facilitator, Ilene Carver, who understood her role in terms of community development rather than intervention. Monthly meetings, twice-a-year full day Saturday reflective workshops, and regular communication between meetings via letter and phone calls all contributed to keeping community members informed and involved.

As the project evolved from the Family Outreach Group to multiple layers of family involvement and to a Leadership Council, the efforts of parents were encouraged, supported, and validated by each of the groups. The Leadership Council will now provide the ongoing structure for the coordination of all family involvement efforts and the Family Outreach Group, as they visit each new family, will draw in new parents to participate in these activities.

In his writings on the importance of positive home/school relationships for children's achievement, Comer (1990) argues that schools, more than parents, are in the "position to create the conditions needed to overcome the difficult relationship barriers." In the case of the O'Hearn School, the effort to involve more families was initiated by the school, but what makes this a unique case is that while remaining committed to the goal of involving more families, the school leadership encouraged and supported the development of the parent voice and responded to the issues as raised and defined by the parent community. The result was an empowering process for families and the heightened possibility of student social and academic success.

The breadth and depth of family involvement at the O'Hearn over a sustained period of time is completely counter to the widespread refrain echoed by so many

> "I have children at four different schools in the Boston system but the O'Hearn is the only one that gets the benefit of my talents and involvement. That's because the O'Hearn is the school where I feel the most valued and respected."
>
> LaJaughn Chaplin

school people that parents don't care and won't participate. The sad reality is that too often parents are asked to come to meetings or other school events so they can be counted as present but where there is no opportunity for them to make their voices heard.

Too often schools seem to replicate the social hierarchy in America which seeks to keep poor people and people of color at the bottom and without power. While everyone at the O'Hearn recognizes there is still a long way to go, the O'Hearn community is engaged in building a new context for learning which challenges the disabling power relations of the larger society and treats each and every family not as a problem to overcome but as a resource to embrace.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Fall 1989	A new principal starts at Patrick O'Hearn and discussion begins about trying to increase parent involvement.
Spring 1991	Parents open Family Center in school library.
September 1991	School receives IRE grant and establishes team to design and implement Family Outreach project.
November 1991	Workshop held to organize Outreach group and launch home visiting program.
December 1991	Family Outreach group begins home visiting and holds first monthly meeting to share experiences.
March 1992	First mobilization by Family Outreach members to turn out parents for Open House -- 90% of school's families attend.
April 1992	Outreach group holds workshop to reflect on work and to brainstorm improvements for following year.
August 1992	Decision made by Family Outreach members to expand home visiting to families of every new child who attends O'Hearn.
September 1992	Home visiting to new families begins.
December 1992	Family Outreach Group organizes enormous turnout for a School Open House.
January 1993	Outreach members participate in workshops to reflect on home visiting effort and on expansion of group's work.
Spring 1993	Community resource area within Family Center is set up. Parent empowerment training begins. Outreach members mobilize parents for March O'Hearn Open House. Again turnout is huge.

June 1993	Family Outreach group and other active family members hold year-end workshop to reflect and strategize. Participants decide to establish an O'Hearn Family Leadership Council for upcoming school year to institutionalize and better coordinate the school's outreach efforts.
September 1993	Family Leadership Council meets prior to the opening of school to plan family involvement priorities for the Fall, including classroom orientation meetings for all parents. Family Outreach members launch home visits to families of all new children. Regular, monthly newsletter begins, entirely written and produced by the parents. Ten parent leaders speak about the committees they are coordinating at a combined O'Hearn Open House/School Parent Council meeting to welcome families.
March 1994	Leadership Council members gather for a workshop to evaluate the work of the Council and to begin making plans for June Peace festival. Parents decide they want to hold meetings several times a year to focus on specific school issues such as working for a full inclusion middle school.
June 1994	Parents organize a full-day Peace Festival. Every child and school staff person participates. Lots of family members are involved. Year-end meeting is held for parents to reflect and to set priorities for the next school year.

The Matthew Sherman Business and Government Preparatory School San Diego, California

by Dr. Rene Nuñez, Facilitator
Paula Lopez, Parent
Maria Salgado-Garcia, Teacher

PREFACE: RECONSIDERING EDUCATION FOR BICULTURAL CHILDREN

The school is in a unique position at this point in history. Calls for sweeping reform in education are heard throughout the nation. Reforms vary from a retreat to what are considered safe, traditional forms — back to the three Rs — to calls to restructure and transform the educational environment. The public school, particularly, is under fire from proposals for market-driven school choice. However, while education is at a critical juncture in its historical development, we believe it is also at a point at which it can address the education of diverse populations.

An important criteria for teachers, principals, and other school personnel to consider — or to reconsider — is the concept of deficits. Fundamental to the schools' philosophy as it relates to bicultural communities is deficit theory. Deficit theory understands the bicultural home to be generally dysfunctional and pathological; it sees bicultural children as basically deficient in those qualities necessary for academic success; and it projects the role of school and teacher as one of fixing these deficiencies. For teachers to be able to understand the processes of bicultural families and grasp the signficance to education of their experiences, they must begin to critically reassess the principles that have driven education for bicultural, non-mainstream children. The essence of the education of bicultural children must be reconsidered.

Most bicultural children operate competently in the home prior to entering the school system. The home is a training ground which prepares children to function in their social environment. However, upon entering school, these children often find themselves in settings where the lessons learned in the home are no longer valid; a reorganization of what the child has learned in the home takes place. This reorganization is not only linguistic, but includes

cognitive domains, sociocultural values, self-perception, and a different world view (Trueba, 1989; Spindler, 1974).

The school thus becomes a toxic environment, not conducive to a self-perception of worth nor to appropriate cognitive development. Testing identifies children very early in their schooling as "slow learners" or "at-risk." Because of language "problems," "learning handicaps," or cultural "deficits," children are put into slow tracks from which they may never emerge. Often they are treated as incompetent or mentally retarded and are marked for life. Henry Trueba (1987) argues that through the enforcement of standards, primarily via tests, teachers become gatekeepers, keeping bicultural children from becoming fully involved in their education.

For bicultural children to flourish, teachers must learn to promote their bicultural voice. That is, the school environment must become a place where the lived experiences that bicultural children bring with them to school are consciously part of the school discourse. The values and worldview that the home sends with their children must be welcomed and must be seen by children as part of the schooling process. To succeed, bicultural children must have the space and must be encouraged by the school to engage each other in an affirmation of their particular and distinctive backgrounds. Jim Cummins (1986) notes that research data suggests that the extent to which a student's language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a signficant predictor of academic achievement.

In such an environment, parents become a key ingredient in the educational well-being of their children. Cummins (1989) states that "minority students are disempowered educationally much the same way that their communities are disempowered by interactions with societal institutions" (p. 58). He argues, however, that parents from bicultural communities involved as partners in their children's education develop a sense of efficacy that translates into positive academic development in children. However, bicultural families generally find it difficult to link up with their children's schools. Part of the problem resides in the families' lack of understanding of the school's processes. However, another large reason for their lack of participation rests with the school.

This report addresses one form of home-school association — the home visitor. It provides a number of dimensions from which to evaluate processes of empowering the bicultural home. This project extended the classroom into the home by means of parent home

visitors who operated as a conduit of information from the school to the home and conversely from the home to the school. The dimensions of home-school relations explored in this study were 1) effects of home-school relations on student achievement, 2) classroom linkages with the home, and 3) parent development as paraprofessionals.

INTRODUCTION

A common educational characteristic found in Mexican-origin communities is low academic achievement. While many variables may affect the academic achievement of children, parent involvement in the educational process has been recognized as a critical element. In the spirit of this assumption the Institute for Responsive Education awarded a three-year grant to Sherman Elementary School in the Fall of 1991 to institute a parent involvement project. What the project would look like was left to the school to decide.

The school's first step was to select a facilitator and establish an action research team to decide upon and implement a parent program. The action research process led to the establishment of a home visitor project. The project was implemented utilizing parents as home visitors; they were paid a stipend. The home visitors were trained in school processes, especially those relating to the classroom, and were hired to establish links between the classroom and the homes of the students. While the project has come to the end of its grant, the school plans to continue the program in some form, perhaps relying on volunteers.

This report discusses the development of action research at the school site, home visits by parent paraprofessionals, themes generated from the visits, and the observed effects of the project on student progress, parent participation in the project, and upon the home visitors themselves. The first section of the report presents background information and focuses on past parent involvement activities which were critical in the development of the home visitor project. The second section presents the development of the project and is broken into four parts: 1) the work of the action research team (ART), 2) the first year of the home visitor project, 3) the second year of the home visitor project, and 4) a consolidation of the findings of the three stages of development. A final section presents the effects of the project on students, parents, and home visitors.

BACKGROUND: THE SCHOOL AND PARENTS

Sherman Business and Government Preparatory School is located in Southeast San Diego. The neighborhood is made up of apartments and small homes mixed with various businesses. The neighborhood is plagued by drug trafficking and prostitution.

The school population is characterized by many single-parent families on AFDC; 98% of the children participate in the breakfast and free lunch program. The school's K-5 population numbers 1,024 plus 96 preschoolers; more than 80% of the students are classified as Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The school has 35 students certified for the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program. Sherman is a business and government total magnet school and has 18 children who bus in from out of the school area. Its ethnic make-up includes approximately 4% African-American, 2.4% Indochinese, 3.8% Anglo-American, and 89.8% Latino, the majority being Spanish-speakers of Mexican origin.

Mission and Goals of Sherman School

The mission and goals of Sherman School are guided by the San Diego City Schools mission statement which states that:

> *It is the mission of our district to educate all students in an integrated setting to become responsible, literate, thinking, and contributing members of a multicultural society through excellence in teaching and learning.*

All district schools have set several goals in each of four major areas to accomplish this mission:

- improving student learning;
- improving teaching;
- enhancing integration and diversity;
- enhancing shared decision-making and community involvement.

The mission at Sherman is to provide a multicultural program integrated throughout an academically challenging curriculum. It is to help students make positive contributions to their community and be responsible members of society. The goals for Sherman are:

- maintain a high level of self-esteem in every student;
- recognize and value the primary language of every student while providing instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL) and Spanish as a Second Language (SSL);
- provide and maintain a firm base in students' primary language;
- plan staff development activities focusing on innovative strategies;
- improve student performance on standardized tests;
- have parents work as partners with school staff and other parents.

The concepts of shared decision-making and parent partnerships found in the mission and goals of the San Diego district and of Sherman School are reflected in the parent programs found at Sherman. In addition to the Home Visitor Project, Sherman supports a number of programs directed at parent development. Periodically, the Parent Institute for Quality Education provides six-week seminars on parenting skills and parent rights in the school. Additionally, a number of workshops and seminars are regularly held concerning academic, community, physical, and mental health issues. Informational meetings concerning community issues such as tenants' rights, drug awareness, and gangs are provided. The school also supports the *Organizacion de Padres Latinos de la Escuela Sherman* (Latino Parents Organization) which is a quasi-independent organization that organizes parent informational and educational presentations, and acts as advocate for school issues. A parent focal point at the school is *El Salon de Padres* (The Parent Room) which serves as a center for the Parent Volunteer Project, which supports a variety of school activities with parent support.

Parent Involvement

The Parent Institute for Quality Education has functioned as a catalyst for parent involvement at Sherman. It made its first appearance at the school in 1987 and has held classes at the school six times since then. The six-week course presented by the Institute begins by involving parents in defining their needs. Classes normally cover issues in the home, such as child development, motivation of the child, and how to support the child's educational processes. The classes cover school culture and parents' rights. Additionally, a class might

cover such issues as bilingual education, drugs, the adolescent, or college recruitment, depending on the needs as defined by the parents.

The legacy of the Institute has been a significantly heightened awareness of parents' potential roles in the school. The work of the parents is reflected in the Parent Volunteer Project, the Latino Parent Organization, and the Home Visitor Project. Additionally, it shows up in the commitment of parents to the needs of the school and the needs of their children — parents speak out.

THE HOME VISITOR PROJECT

Critical Phases in the Life of the Project

The first important phase of this project was its planning. This came about through the consolidation of the Action Research Team (ART). This was a learning process for all concerned. After some seven months of hard work, ART came to understand its function and was able to structure a plan for the Home Visitor Project. The difficulties that ART faced were varied. However, these difficulties were overcome, and ART was able to lay out viable plans for the project.

The second phase was the initiation of the Home Visitor Project. This was a process that provided a source of investigation that proved valuable for the school. Teachers and parents were able to exchange their perspectives about the education of their children through the medium of the home visitor.

The third phase was the second year of the Home Visitor Project. This third year of the project saw the solidification of the parents as home visitors. They became knowledgeable in the job they have been doing and were able to give strong leadership to the project.

Year 1: Planning the Home Visitor Project

Action Research — Parents, Students, and Teachers Working Together

The Home Visitor Project brought parents, students, and teachers together to establish an Action Research Team. ART included teachers, parents, aides, students, the principal, the aide in charge of parent affairs, and the facilitator. The members of ART had few instructions about how this project would look. After eight months of training in action research, review of the goals and conditions of the project, and debate concerning the type of project that the school could manage, ART decided to focus on a home visiting project for second-grade children. The focus for the Sherman ART was to determine how well home visits generate increased family participation in school-related activities and to what degree the home visits impacted their children's education. Parents with children in the second grade would be selected and trained as home visitors. The goal of the project would be threefold:

> 1) to bolster parents' support for their children's education by linking the classroom with the home in terms of communicating the particular needs that the children had in school and to help parents support their children's education;
>
> 2) to promote parent participation in the school in terms of participating in school events, visiting the classrooms, volunteering at the school, and participating in the decision-making committees of the school; and
>
> 3) to participate in research that both evaluates the program and provides the school with valuable information concerning the community it serves.

ART used a variety of methods to collect information and data about how the project was progressing:

Thematic Generation. A way to carry out collective investigation with a community is to enter into a participatory process discovering elements reflected in the experiences of the community which point to critical issues such as language barriers, inadequate housing, etc. This is the approach taken by ART, which might be called thematic generation. Once themes were identified by the team, these themes became the focus of reflection in follow-up conversations in which the facilitator, home visitors, teachers, and parents participated. Themes emerging in the work of the home visitors and by visited parents were discussed in ART meetings, and subsequent home visits explored the validity of the themes.

Home Visitor Journals. Home visitors maintained journals from which themes were drawn. They identified themes based on the stories that they were told by the parents they visited. As they visited new homes they focused on the themes to determine the degree of signficance that the themes might have with parents. As information about parents' views increased, new themes were revealed which in turn were studied. Thus, in one sense, the parents that were visited became part of the research process.

The Interactive Journal. In addition to home visitor journals, teachers and home visitors kept a notebook called the interactive journal. This notebook was accessible to both home visitors and teachers. Home visitors recorded comments, observations, and ideas that they uncovered during visits in this notebook. Teachers, in turn, would read these comments and respond with their observations about student behavior in the classroom. This interactive journal provided a mechanism for home visitors and teachers to think together about the visits and the impact they were having on students.

Portfolios. To help document the home visits, teachers and home visitors created portfolios for each child which contained current addresses and telephone numbers, homework assignments, teachers' expectations for students, and other comments that teachers had for parents. Home visitors would take the portfolios on their visits and share the children's progress with their parents. With the high mobility rate in this community, the portfolio was a useful tool for keeping track of changes in addresses and telephone numbers so parents could be contacted about special events, conferences, and meetings.

The most detrimental school situation that impinged on the work of ART during that first year was the nature of the school scheduling. Because of the large numbers of students and a lack of adequate space in the school, the school had been assigned year-round status and put on a multi-track system, which meant that 1/4 of the school was out at any given time. This created a discontinuous planning process in which decisions or suggestions had to be reexplained and rediscussed at each meeting. It caused the work of ART to become stretched out over a longer period than would have been necessary under traditional school schedules. Despite these problems, ART accomplished its goal and set the Home Visitor Project into motion.

Initiating the Home Visitor Project

The identification of prospective home visitors was accomplished in two ways. Initially, first grade teachers were asked to identify parents; later, flyers were sent to the homes of second graders inviting parents to meetings to discuss the project. From these meetings additional prospective home visitors were identified. Six home visitors and two alternates were selected by a review committee made up of teachers, parents, the principal, and the project facilitator. Once selected, the home visitors participated in a week-long orientation/training session. The district and the school (the principals, teachers, and other school and district personnel) provided the training. This was followed by two weeks of closely supervised on-the-job training. Periodic follow-up sessions were planned.

The Home Visitor Project consisted of two home visitors each assigned to a classroom teacher. ART felt that home visitors should travel in teams of two, therefore, it created teams made up of two home visitors and their respective teachers to which they were assigned. The home visitors would split their time between the classroom and children's homes. Their process would include close coordination with the second grade teacher, acting as a link between the teacher and the home, and acting as resource brokers for parents who might have particular needs that they could not fulfill. The home visit would not be limited to the homes of those students who exhibited specific needs; home visitors would visit as many homes as possible, attempting to bring as many parents as possible into the process of home/school partnerships. Finally, they were considered researchers, thus, the home visit would have two aspects: a communication aspect and a research aspect.

Teachers would be involved in a learning process involving both research and practice. Their relationship with the home visitors and, through them, their connection to the parents of the children they teach, would add a new dimension to the normal meetings they have with parents, e.g., open houses and parent meetings. It was also clear that the coordination between the teacher and the home visitor would be crucial in developing the fullest extension of the possibilities of the project. For while home visits certainly would bring the school into the home, it was important to recognize that, conversely, these visits would bring the home into the school.

Year 2: Implementing the Home Visitor Project

The initial members of ART disbanded after the Home Visitor Project was initiated. They had accomplished their goals. In this period, ART was redesigned to include a small working core of the initial researchers with the addition of the second grade teachers and the home visitors. The task of ART now became the evaluation of the ongoing work. Much of ART's work during this period revolved around making the project functional. The home visiting process was being learned by the parent visitors and the coordination with the project was being learned by the teachers. Not all of the second grade teachers bought into the project totally; however, several of the teachers became enthusiastically involved in it. These teachers carried the program. ART met monthly to assess the project and to clarify objectives. It also discussed the emerging themes for research. At this point, the ART had two main tasks to accomplish: 1) solidify the home visitor project and 2) reflect upon the emerging themes and changes in student behavior as a result of home visits.

The final task of ART for Year 2 was to set up the continuation of the project for the coming year. Despite the problems, several teachers felt that the program had resulted in observable progress in parent participation and children's class behavior. ART recommended that the project continue. It decided that the project would follow the families into the third grade and at a later date would recruit more volunteers to continue the home visits for the second grade. Teacher training in parent relations would be added to the training program.

Year Two: Impact on the School

During the second year of the project, reports continued to deal with the operational aspects of the endeavor. The following information is drawn from the evaluations of the home visitors and teachers involved in the program. It was an initial stage of ethnographic research in which the information presented by the home visitors and the teachers emerged from the direct/indirect contacts that they were having with the parents.

Reports from Teachers

Teachers' reports were divided between seeing the Home Visitor Project as effective and seeing it as potentially effective but falling short due to organizational weaknesses. The project had weak buy-in by some of the teachers, thus only three of the six teachers submitted reports.

A major concern for teachers was time. Teachers found it difficult to "squeeze" another program into their busy schedule:

> *"... the idea was to have trained parents to act as our arms and legs to reach the 'hard-to-reach' families. That was a wonderful idea in itself. It is an awfully time-consuming task to a teacher who is busy trying to just make it through the school day."*

Another major concern related to the degree of communication being carried out. One of the English-speaking teachers saw language as a problem:

> *"I am an English-speaking teacher. Many of my families speak a different language. I had an English-speaking parent volunteer who buddied-up with a Spanish-speaking volunteer. Much of what was to be relayed to the Spanish-speaking parents was confusing and not clearly communicated — causing much, I repeat, much problem (sic). I had several Southeast Asian families who needed the assistance too and never received the help they needed."*

And another problem that teachers addressed involved organizational questions. Teachers felt that the home visitors were sometimes unsure of their limits insofar as the information they could give to the community and that the goals of the project had not been communicated clearly to the teachers now involved in the project. Clearly there was a communication problem between the teachers and the home visitors — neither were sure exactly what the home visitor's job was. Teachers felt that this problem cost them precious time that would have been more beneficial if used in other ways. These views were exacerbated by the continuing problem of the year-round multi-track school year. Attempts to consolidate teachers work around the project were weakened because all of the teachers could not be at critical meetings.

The teachers, nonetheless, reported that the most positive result of the project was their ability to communicate with parents with whom they had had no direct communication.

They felt that students were more positive and more willing to learn after visits and that parents were more apt to come to the class after receiving visits and were more at ease in the classroom. One teacher reported the process she used for the project:

> *"The home visitor program was very useful to me. The most important challenge that I faced was finding time and a way of communicating with the parent visitors. I decided to write a journal for each student. In the journal, I described the status of the student in reading and math and provided positive comments concerning his or her work. I also had a separate file of the student's daily work."*

Reports from Home Visitors

Home visitors were asked to report on *los obstaculos o problemas y los exitos del programa* (the obstacles or problems and successes of the program). A comment from one home visitor was that *para mi no hubo problemas sino experiencias* (for me there were no problems, only experiences). This principle will guide this report on problems or obstacles that home visitors faced; instead of problems, they will be seen as challenges or experiences through which we learn. One home visitor writes:

> *"We all agreed that we would like to see the program continue but with strong training for the home visitors, with better cooperation on the part of the teachers, better program organization and more strictness on the part of the facilitator. We would also like to have a better understanding of the academic materials of the school."*

The home visitors reported that most parents were very happy to see them, especially those who could not get to school often. Parents seemed happy to successfully resolve communications problems with the school. Additionally, there were signs that for some of the children whose homes were visited parents became more involved in their education and more involved in school activities.

The concerns of home visitors were related to communication and organization. They felt that information concerning the Home Visitor Project was not adequately disseminated within the school administrative process. Additionally, communication from teachers about the child to be visited and between the home visitors and the facilitator and the principal was poor. Furthermore, the home visitors felt they needed more training. They noted that it

takes time and experience to learn what they are doing. They wanted more educational information that they could share with the families they visited. They felt that teachers believed that they were not qualified for the work they were doing; this brought out some doubts in their minds concerning their own capabilities. In spite of this, a clear theme that was present in their comments was that they, themselves, were growing because of this experience.

One of the home visitors was selected as assistant to the facilitator and was responsible for calling the home visitors and letting teachers know about upcoming meetings or other activities. She felt that the home visitor process was being grasped by the home visitors as they learned on the job. Their grasp of the job is reflected in the following comment by an assistant home visitor:

> *"In the beginning of our meetings with parents they would remain quiet. We explained that we weren't teachers but that, like themselves, we were parents of second graders trained as home visitors and were there to support their work with their children's education. As our meetings progressed, these parents opened up to us. One parent related that she felt inhibited before teachers, but that she felt fine talking to us. In some cases, parents would discuss what they do with their children to support their school assignments. In other cases, parents didn't have any idea how to help their childrenn but were open to suggestions. We suggested that children should have a special place set aside for them to do their homework, that they should turn off the TV while children do their homework, and that they spend ten or fifteen minutes daily reviewing their homework. If they had reading assigned, for instance, the parents could spend some time listening to the child's explanation of what they had understood from their reading."*

Another interesting aspect was the effect of the program on the home visitors themselves. One home visitor related how her work and experiences in the project were causing her to feel very good about herself. She felt very confident in her abilities to carry out her responsibilities. This is reflected in her reaction to one parent interview during a home visit:

> *"Esta entrevista fue algo maravillosa ya que la hice yo sola en la escuela [This was a marvelous interview, since I did it by myself at school]."* (This refers to the fact that for the most part, the home visitors worked as teams of two. In this case, this home visitor's team member could not participate so she went ahead and did the visit by herself.)

Year 3: Consolidating the Home Visitor Project

ART was once again reconfigured as the 1993-94 school year began. This was necessary because new teachers (from the third grade) became a part of the project. Three factors made this year's project significantly stronger than the year before. First of all, two of the most enthusiastic teachers from the second grade group were now teaching third grade and became the backbone of the work of ART. Secondly, the home visitors had one year of experience in home visits which gave them a far better understanding of their work than they had had in the first year of the home visiting. Finally, in the third year of the project, the problem of multi-tracks was alleviated. While maintaining its year-round status, the school went to a single-track system, which meant that all students and all teachers were at school at the same time. Meetings could now be held in which all the teachers would be present.

Throughout this final year of the project, the home visitors were able to visit the homes of all third graders. At the end of the year, ART began to plan expansion of the program into the next grade level. The team was hoping to add a new grade level each year, but with funding limitations were trying to find a way to continue the program into the 1994-95 school year. They decided that the team would try to recruit new home visitors for the school year as volunteers. The home visitors, together with the teachers, would then train these new home visitors in how to do visits and to learn from their experiences.

Year Three: Impact on the School

Reports from Teachers

Four of the five third grade teachers involved in the project this year reported their perceptions about the project. They were asked to indicate changes that they have observed in the children whose homes have been visited by the home visitors and in the degree or quality of parent participation in the school. They were asked to provide whatever information they felt was relevant to the work of home visits. Additionally, they were asked to make observations concerning the development and the work of the Home Visitor Project.

One teacher dwelt on organizational problems — she felt that objectives needed to be clarified, that perhaps meetings were too many and more could be done in individual teacher meetings with the home visitors, and that there was too much paperwork required.

She felt that initially one teacher had provided leadership for the project, but after he left in January 1994, the leadership was missing. However, the problem of communication and organization did not show up in any significant manner as it had the previous year. The facilitator's observations were that it was the experience and knowledge of the home visitors that facilitated communications. Teachers felt better about the home visitors' capabilities. One teacher noted:

> *"I think that it would be great if the program continued this year. As a new teacher it helped me a lot."*

Parents were becoming more involved and homework was coming in on a more regular basis. One teacher noted that:

> *"I felt that the program did help to get the parents involved. Mrs. Lopez [a home visitor] did an excellent job of helping me keep contact with the parents. She said that the majority of the parents did like the program. Homework did improve, if I asked her to ask the parents for help."*

Teachers found that parents generally felt good about the project. The principal reported that parents were grateful to have the home visitors as liaisons between them and the teacher and that some of these parents came to school for meetings and conferences for the first time. One teacher noted that as a result of the project, parents seem to put more importance on school. The home visitor program, though limited to one class level, was now operating well. The home visitors had become seasoned paraprofessionals.

Although one teacher felt that homework had not been affected by the project, other teachers reported that homework improved. The principal also reported that parents "were more supportive of having their children's homework done and returned to school." One teacher noted that "the children were aware that Mrs. Carillo would be visiting sooner or later so that they'd better behave ..."

Teachers agreed that the project helped them to reach parents who aren't normally reached. The principal reported that "teachers have shared that there is more positive and frequent communication with parents as a result of having someone care enough to go to their homes."

Reports from Home Visitors

A strong feeling runs through the home visitors that they were doing a better job in the third year than in the second and that homes were welcoming them and embracing the project. One home visitor states:

> *"I think this year the program is doing much better than last year. More parents are talking to us and inviting us back again. They really seem to like the program and think its helping their children. More teachers are all into the program this year. . . . This year everyone seems to be working together well. I really think it's doing well. Hope we can keep it up next year."*

The data gathered from the home visitors bears this out. Of the parents in thirty-nine homes that were visited this year, almost half indicated that they felt that the project was doing a good job, that they liked the program, and/or that they welcomed the home visitors and invited them to return.

Home visitors reported that parents became more aware of the demands of the school, know better where their children need help, and became motivated to expand their support of their children's schoolwork. Many parents indicate that they spend more time helping their children with their schoolwork due to the home visitor intervention. Some parents, however, are unable to help their children because of extenuating circumstances, e.g., children at other schools further away from home, work, large families, illness.

GENERATIVE THEMES: CHALLENGES AND RESOLUTION

The key themes of this project emerged from three sources: parents, home visitors, and teachers. Three types of relationships were in play: ART processes, teacher/home visitor relations, and home visits. The themes that were generated have to do with organizational and communication concerns related to the carrying out of the home visitor project, concerns related to communication between home visitors and teachers, and the thematic generation that occurred in the home visits.

Dynamics of the Action Research Team (ART)

A problem that faced this project since its inception was its multi-track school schedule. The participants of ART and the project found it difficult to sustain their decisions due to this schedule. Under this schedule, carrying out decisions in a timely manner became difficult. Despite these problems, ART was able to accomplish its goals. Another problem that faced ART was that each year its members disbanded, and new members made up the team the following school year. Generally, the core of ART consisted of the teachers, the home visitors, the principal, and the facilitator.

The importance of the facilitator in this project was the continuity that he afforded to the project. This helped overcome the multi-track schedule as well as the annual changing of ART. In the third year of the project, the school was no longer required to go on a multi-track schedule, which enabled ART to be more consistent and meet more regularly.

Dynamics of Teacher-Home Visitor Communication

Problems in organization and communication were uppermost in the minds of both the teachers and the home visitors during the first year of operation. The pressure of time was also seen as a critical issue. Some teachers felt that the project was not organized well and that the home visitors were not prepared for the work of relating to parents. Home visitors also felt that they were not well prepared. But they also thought that sometimes the teachers were not providing enough information about the children whose homes they would visit to prepare them for the visit. They felt that the teachers were not fully committed to the project. The qualifications of the home visitors were questioned and teacher commitment was doubted.

These challenges — the report of poor communication between teachers, the feelings of both teachers and home visitors that perhaps the home visitors were not qualified to do this work, and the belief that teachers did not fully support the project — were resolved through collective work between teachers and home visitors. Some of the teachers worked closely with the home visitors. They provided the home visitor with clear information and clear directions on their wishes. Some of the teachers created information worksheets (as part of portfolios) in which they could note information about the students. This cleared up the

communications gap that parents felt, it prepared the parents better — clearing feelings of inadequacy — and it saved time for the teacher, resolving the problem of time as well.

Subsequently, both teachers and parents, as well as the principal, saw positive things emerging from the project: parents willing to visit the classroom more and feeling more at ease, children's enthusiasm for the school growing, accounts from parents that they were working more closely with their children, and reports from teachers that more homework was being turned in by the children.

Dynamics of the Home Visit

Several key themes emerged in the first year of the project during meetings that home visitors were having with parents. They reflected concerns that parents have about the educational processes in which their children were involved. Four clear themes emerged: 1) Spanish-speaking parents worry whether their children are receiving sufficient English instruction [This reflects the tremendous importance that these parents give to their children's mastery of English. On the other hand, an earlier random survey of parents indicated that they also feel strongly that their children should maintain their Spanish language and Mexican culture.]; 2) parents wonder about the quality of education their children receive in American schools [Questions concerning the quality of American education would be interesting to pursue. An earlier study indicates that Mexican parents, while acknowledging their tremendous lead in technological innovation, consider American schools weaker in at least two areas: Mexican parents assert that Mexican schools are more advanced in the level of mathematics taught to children. Mexican children coming to this country, they claim, are one to two years more advanced than their American peers. Additionally, Mexicans criticize the lack of discipline in American schools, noting the strictness in Mexican schools that guide children to respect their elders and the property of others (Nuñez, 1994)]; 3) parents do not seem to be aware of the classwork activities in which their children are involved; and 4) parents do not seem to be aware of the resources available at Sherman.

Initially it had been planned that these themes would be followed up to consolidate parents' reflections about these feelings. However, this did not occur in the second year of the project because the home visitors and the teachers focused much more on particular problems, i.e., homework, math problems, and absences. The home visitors did not specifically probe the initial themes; nonetheless the strength with which they were observed

in the project's first year of operation should be acknowledged, and future work in this area should explore these themes. Each of these themes — concerns that the community has about the education of their children — can be addressed by the school through community meetings or workshops. Perhaps this can be taken up by the new ART that should be established for the next year of the home visits.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Home-school partnerships address the knowledge that is missed between the parent and the teachers that is essential for the cognitive development and psychological well-being of the student. The authenticity of a partnership must rely on the reflection of the information that is being exchanged in programs such as the Home Visitor Project. The following examples of information exchanges can promote understanding that can lead to better perceptions of the children in the schools.

Exchanges that Occur Between Home and School

The nature of exchanges as experienced in the project, of course, is two way; from the school to the home and from the home to the school. Information transferred from the classroom to the home concerns classroom activities, quality of work of the student, and problems that need attention (such as the lack of homework, problems with multiplication tables, and so on). An example of this exchange happened with Antonio (not his real name) who was not bringing home or doing his homework. Antonio's mother told the home visitor that he does not get any homework. But when the home visitors assured her that indeed he was being assigned homework, she said that she would begin to check every night to see that he does the work or he would not be able to watch TV.

In another case, Mary (not her real name) was not doing her homework. Mary's mother, however, said that Mary does her homework every night and packs it into her backpack. She does not understand why the teacher does not get it. Mary says she puts it on her desk and that it gets thrown out. Mary's mother felt that the teacher should have a special place where the homework could be put. This problem was communicated to the teacher and a special place created.

Additionally, home visitors carry information concerning activities at the school. Exchanges from the home to the school are of a different nature. They have to do with background or conditions facing the students that may mitigate the work of the school. For instance, the home visitors went to the home of Rocio with two problems. The child would not participate in class discussion and she did not know her times tables. The mother told the home visitors that Rocio had just arrived from Mexico two months earlier where she lived with her grandparents. Rocio's mother related that her daughter is very shy and has always stayed by herself. She also told the home visitors that Rocio did know her times tables, but that she would not say them in front of the class. Subsequently, Rocio's mother spoke to the teacher, asking her to quiz Rocio when they were alone. The teacher did so and discovered that Rocio did indeed know her times tables.

Conclusion

The work of establishing authentic partnerships between the home and the school must respond to the challenges and resolution of obstacles that impede genuine collective work. Not only must parents and teachers be able to recognize the value each of them have to this process, but the facilitators and researchers must treat parents and teachers — communities under study — as equals in the research process. Each of the participants brings to the project unique experiences and special knowledge. The study itself must be guided by the needs and perceptions of the communities under study. The facilitator must simply be a partisan tool of that work. Thus, it should not be a matter of whether the teacher or parent "claims ownership" of the project, rather it should be a matter of the facilitator/researcher fulfilling the role of resource and recorder of the project.

As more and more home visits occur and as more collective work occurs between parents and teachers, current themes will deepen and others will emerge that can provide invaluable information for the school. This information can clarify issues that the school needs to take into account when expanding the partnership between the home and school. For us at Sherman, the information contained in this report also signals the work that is ahead of us.

III. Connecting Family and Community Involvement to School Improvement

Through the Parent-Teacher Action Research project, we have sought to understand the impact of school-driven family-school-community partnerships on school policy. To what extent are schools' efforts at building stronger home-school-community partnerships being integrated into their overall efforts at reform? Our assumption is that stronger family and community involvement represents a comprehensive and integral strategy for transforming schools rather than an end-goal itself.

In previous work, we have noted a pattern in which school level efforts at family and community involvement tend to be disconnected from broader efforts at improvement (Davies et al., 1992). The implicit goal has been to increase parent presence in the school with the tacit understanding that somehow having more classroom volunteers or parents on the school council will contribute to children's learning. The question, parent involvement for what? is often left unanswered.

Changes in Quality and Focus of Parent-Teacher Collaboration Benchmarks to Student Achievement

Schools participating in the Parent-teacher Action Research Project have provided new evidence that a collaborative effort to build stronger family-school-community partnerships can have benefits for children. The fact remains that two and a half years (the time frame for this project and for most others) is too short to measure sustained outcomes in children's learning and assessment. While gains might be made, it is difficult to say that family and community involvement is the sole cause, especially when multiple factors affect how children learn.

Traditionally, schools have measured the early impact of family-school-community partnerships by documenting increases in the level and frequency of parents' and teachers' participation in school activities, such as workshops, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Schools participating in the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project have continued to use these traditional measures while developing new kinds of benchmarks. They

have identified changes in the quality and focus of parent-teacher collaboration which are the building blocks for fundamental changes in school environment that can lead to success in children's learning and achievement. These changes include:

- **The development of a constructive two-way communication process between families and school staff**

Effective collaboration between parents and teachers involves a shift from the traditional practice of notifying parents only on those occasions when students are acting up in class or having a problem. Negative communication sends a message to parents that they are not partners in children's learning, but rather are to blame for the problems that their children are having.

To change this dynamic, some schools in the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project have focused on developing a constructive two-way communication process between parents and school staff. Rather than looking for increases in the frequency of parent-teacher contact, action research teams have focused instead on the quality of the interaction:

- *In the context of the interaction, are children's needs being defined jointly by parents and teachers?*
- *Is there steady emphasis on the possibilities for learning rather than students' failures?*
- *Is responsibility for maintaining the flow of information shared by both parents and teachers?*

Schools have looked for answers to these questions within the context of non-traditional communication strategies including home visits, phone-trees, and homework hotlines that electronically update parents with information about their children's homework assignments. They have developed their own data collection strategies to monitor changes.

Interactive Journals. Two schools have used interactive journals to look at changes in communication processes between school staff and families receiving home visits. The journal is a place where the individual conducting the home visit and/or the parent write down their impressions or insights of the home visit and teachers respond and write their concerns or updates on what they are doing in the classroom. The journal is passed back and forth between home and school through students or home visitors. Periodically, parents are given the opportunity to volunteer their journals as reflective data for action research teams.

Phone Log. At least one school has used a phone log to monitor changes in school-home communication. The phone log enables parents or staff, in charge of getting the word out to a designated group of parents, to keep track not only of the frequency but the substance of the interaction with individual parents. Each time, a parent calls or is called, phone-tree members jot down the focus of the conversation, the kinds of information shared, and/or problems discussed. Phone-tree members regularly consult phone logs to identify important themes and challenges around school-home communication which are then discussed at action research team meetings.

Answering Machines. In schools that have set up telephones to communicate with the home better, answering machines were used to not only record updates on homework assignments, but also for parents to leave messages for teachers. By keeping track of messages, the answering machine became an easy and creative way to document changes in what parents and teachers discussed, how often parents and teachers communicated, and changes in attitudes where conversations shift from blaming to mutual respect. Teachers logged their conversations with parents and brought common concerns or issues to action research meetings to be discussed and resolved by the whole team.

- **The increased participation of families and teachers in educational planning and assessment for individual children**

While on-going substantive communication between families and schools creates a process for defining problems jointly, increasing participation of families and teachers in educational planning can provide ideas and strategies for solving these problems. Traditionally, schools have measured program progress by documenting increased parent or teacher participation on governance teams. But, in many instances, these kinds of indicators provide a narrow lens on family and teacher participation in that only a handful of parents and teachers generally have the opportunity to serve on the teams.

Action research teams have widened the lens for documenting participation to include educational planning that is focused around needs of the individual child. They have looked for evidence of parent and teacher input into decisions about placement or long-term strategies by asking the following questions:

- To what extent does the learning plan for an individual child reflect agreement between parents and teachers on educational priorities?

- To what extent does the plan utilize the expertise which both parents and teachers bring to the educational process?

- Does the plan include clear definitions of parents and teachers' responsibilities in working toward educational goals?

To begin to monitor the progress of parents and teachers who may not have the time and confidence to participate in schoolwide planning, action research teams have built new data collection strategies into educational plans and assessment tools.

Family Portfolios. Portfolios are an increasingly popular assessment strategy that allow a child's progress to be measured from a number of different dimensions. One school in the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project has developed an approach to portfolio assessment that allows teams concurrently to monitor changes in parent and teacher participation in educational planning and other areas. Family portfolios can include families' assessment of the needs and skills that families and teachers have identified as important to a child's learning. Portfolios also provide an on-going record of the ideas and suggestions that individual parents and teachers have generated in parent-teacher meetings, in workshops that they have attended, or informal conversations. These records (which can be everything from notes scribbled by teachers or a parent coordinator to formal correspondence between home and school) can provide action research teams with a changing snapshot of the resources and needs parents and teachers are bringing to a child's learning process.

- **The increased participation of teachers and parents in schoolwide educational decision-making, curriculum development, and assessment**

Active participation of families and teachers in educational planning can generate creative, responsive solutions to children's unique learning needs. Successful implementation of these reforms requires participation of teachers and parents in schoolwide decisions which support changes in instructional strategies and support for individual children.

Schools participating in the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project have monitored the increased participation of parents and teachers in schoolwide decision-making through close examination of the decision-making process on school-based teams. For them, parent and teacher signatures on school improvement plans or proposals for funding are one of the least important indicators of parent-teacher collaboration. Instead, they are interested in actual roles teachers and parents played in the decision-making process:

- How were the goals generated and articulated?
- What roles have been assigned to parents and teachers in order to implement strategies?
- Who is accountable for what?

School-based Assessment of Decision-Making Processes. Some action research teams have developed simple program assessment questionnaires for members of school-based decision-making teams to help them monitor parents' and teachers' actual contributions to the decision-making process. In some cases, team members are asked twice a year to identify an important decision that the team has made and why they perceive it to be significant. Concurrently, they are asked to describe their role in that particular decision-making process. Teams have used parents' and teachers' responses to stimulate discussion of the facilitators and obstacles to active contribution rather than mere representation of parents and teachers on decision-making teams.

Meeting Notes. One way that action research teams have documented the participation of teachers and parents in making decisions about curriculum and assessment is through notes of action research team meetings. Either a facilitator or a designated recorder would take notes and photocopy them for the team before the next meeting. One project facilitator left wide margins for team members to make comments which were then incorporated and handed out at meetings. The notes provided a way to not only document discussions within meetings but also as a means for each team member to reflect and comment on the discussion. This is particularly important for team members who are not as confident in speaking up during meetings but are interested in participating in the discussion.

By documenting and reflecting on their progress, action research teams have developed new ways of recording substantive changes in relationships within schools and between schools and families. Taken together, the outcomes deepen traditional measurements of parent and teacher participation in partnership activities. Their work suggests that parent-teacher collaboration is rooted in changes in relationships between individual parents and teachers, is nurtured through a constructive two-way communication process, and is beneficial as a creative, responsive learning strategy for individual children and the entire school. Establishing a process as complex as action research, however, is not without challenges within the school building and at the district level. In the following sections, we have identified three obstacles at the school level to action research and some strategies for overcoming them. These sections are followed by a discussion of district-level obstacles and some recommendations for overcoming them.

School-Level Obstacles to Action Research and Family-School-Community Partnerships

The Parent-Teacher Action Research Project was designed to help schools learn for themselves how their efforts at family and community involvement could contribute to goals of school improvement and to explore a process (parent-teacher action research) for continually improving the project and ultimately their school. Through our close-up examination of eight schools, we have sought to understand the factors which impede or facilitate school efforts.

Home-school-community partnerships and action research processes invite parents, teachers, students, and agency staff to work together in new ways and build relationships which are focused on children's needs. The experience of the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project suggests that there are three primary obstacles which prevent effective collaboration from taking root: i) lack of space, ii) lack of time, and iii) fragmentation of school improvement processes. Without changes in these areas, efforts to build family and community involvement are likely to remain on the margins of school reform efforts rather than becoming an integral transformative strategy driven by the needs and resources of a cross-section of the community.

Lack of Space

If parents, teachers, and community workers are going to collaborate in new ways, then they need to be provided with adequate space to do so. Traditionally, school facilities have been used for two basic purposes: instruction and administration. Anything that did not fall easily into these categories was considered a low-priority need — necessarily scheduled for after hours when the real business of teaching and learning was done and children and teachers had gone home. Assigning space in this way reflects traditional approaches to partnership in which family and community involvement is equated with monthly parent-teacher meetings or the infrequent open house.

Collaborative activities whose objectives are to support families in substantive ways need a more permanent "home" within the school — a room that is accessible at different times during the day, a space that unlike the teacher's lounge or main office is not considered someone else's turf, a place that can serve multiple purposes including a check-in center for

parent volunteers and mentors, a quiet meeting room where collaborative projects can be planned, or a storage room for home learning materials. (For more information on family centers (see Johnson (1994).

Even in schools with a commitment to making family and community involvement an integral part of the school, space for collaborative activities remains limited. Family and community involvement activities are scattered throughout the school. A family center — where it is hoped parents will feel comfortable and welcome — is opened in a room the size of a large closet. An important school improvement meeting is held in the hallway where disruptions are constant. A parent coordinator spends a year battling for a file drawer to store her records and materials. Parent educators who are hired by the school to support families at home have no place in the school to meet and discuss common concerns.

While limited space for collaborative activities has a lot to do with the inadequacy of school facilities, a school's use of available space may be out of step with their commitment to responding holistically to children's needs. A nurses's office which is only staffed two mornings a week remains unused at other times. The library, the largest room in the school, has empty shelves while the parent coordinator searches for space to store videos and other materials for parents to check out. Children categorized as educationally disabled are taught in annexed buildings while "regular classrooms" are flooded with mentors and parent volunteers.

Lack of space for collaborative activities can discourage the involvement of less active parents and teachers for whom something as small as change in location can be cause not to participate. Relationships within schools are strained as rooms designated for other purposes (e.g., the teachers' lounge) are borrowed. With no place to call home, family and community involvement activities remain vulnerable to competing priorities which symbolically and literally may occupy a more central place in the school.

Lack of Time

Collaborative activities require on-going attention from the individuals who are responsible for carrying them out. Whether the context of the collaboration is schoolwide or involves specific grade levels, one or two classrooms, or an individual child, teachers, principals, mentors, parent volunteers, and others need time to plan, coordinate, and evaluate

their efforts. A school-based improvement team needs opportunities to solicit input from the rest of the staff and parents on their school improvement plan. Teachers who volunteer to develop a breakfast program need joint planning periods to discuss ways of involving other teachers in the project. Teachers also need time to consult and advise parents and community volunteers working in their classroom so that their presence supports the instructional process rather than causes confusion. Parent educators who work with families in the home need time to update teachers on a child's progress, solve problems, and relay parent's suggestions.

Even as their schools embrace and expand a team approach to school and classroom improvement, individuals involved in the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project have found that they have little time during the school day for collaborative work. Teachers across grade levels may have spent two years working on a project but continue to be denied a common planning period. Minutes that could be spent planning with classroom volunteers are taken up by emergency hall monitoring or lunch duty.

Although union contracts are often blamed for constraints on the time of teachers, other school staff (e.g., custodians), parents, and principals also exert an important influence. The way in which the school day is structured, master schedules planned, or performance is evaluated can facilitate or impede collaborative work. A principal can make it difficult for groups of teachers to find the time to meet together in small groups. She can also determine not to uphold a district policy which grants teachers throughout the school a common planning period. In evaluations of teachers, she can place higher value on individualized work than on working in collaboration with others.

When time for collaborative activities is not built into the school day, the impact of family-school-community partnerships is undercut. Principals spend a great deal of time micromanaging projects — juggling schedules rather than providing other forms of leadership. Collaboration with families remains an activity that teachers are expected to do on their own time. Without the encouragement and expectation to spend time on family and community involvement activities, more hesitant members of the school staff frequently do not. "I don't have the time" remains an acceptable, unquestioned excuse for opting out of any activity involving parents. Even those teachers who are motivated to spend time on an exciting new project are apt to disengage from collaborative work once the project ends.

Fragmentation of School Improvement Processes

At the school level, it is not uncommon to find a number of different teams all working on specific projects related to children's learning but who rarely talk to each other. To avoid duplication of effort and integrate their activities into a school improvement-planning process, school teams need comprehensive updates on the progress and priorities of other reform initiatives underway at the school. What were the results of the family and community involvement's task force survey of parents? How should the results of the survey inform the development of the Chapter 1's schoolwide project improvement plan?

In some schools participating in the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project, we have found little evidence of coordination between the pieces of the action research team and the school improvement council. For instance, a survey administered at the beginning of a year may underscore the need for an increase in mentors and tutors who can support children's learning within classrooms. Independently, the decision is made to use Chapter 1 funds to hire teachers to work with students outside of the classroom. Teachers responsible for testing out and adapting the school's whole language curriculum may have learned the need to introduce changes slowly in order to build parent trust. But this valuable insight is ignored when the school-based management team settles on a rapid time frame for expanding its home visiting program.

Fragmented project planning is caused in part by each new wave of reform requiring the creation of yet another school team or council. The principal can intensify fragmentation by controlling and limiting opportunities for information sharing between teams. Rather than using the information generated by the action research team to create more responsive priorities and activities for families and students, school improvement councils (with the urging of the principal) can incorporate the priorities and activities that are important to the principal.

When not coordinated with school improvement processes, action research and family and community involvement can end up contributing to fragmentation rather than addressing it. A school may renew its commitment to collaboration by rewriting its mission statement. But the mission has little chance of being operationalized if the school improvement plan does not identify parent involvement as a strategy for achieving these goals. A handful of teachers and parents in the school may develop the skill and competence to drive the school change process. But when it comes time to make the important decisions concerning staffing or

budgeting, the principal and school improvement council continue to rely on their own intuition rather than shared knowledge of what works.

Strategies for Building Stronger Family-School-Community Partnerships and Ongoing School Improvement

Schools involved in action research and partnership-building face significant obstacles at the school level. Issues such as lack of time and space and fragmentation of school improvement processes are familiar challenges to school improvement. They represent that unspoken tradition of "givens" in educational reform — the reason why something doesn't work, cannot be tried, or cannot be continued — the things that people in schools can do little about. Schools in this project, however, illustrate how action research and building partnerships have enabled schools to develop strategies to overcome these barriers. As part of our analysis, we developed a framework which enables us to identify school-level strategies for increasing the scope of family and community involvement projects (What can assist schools in moving from a narrow approach to family and community involvement to more comprehensive strategies aimed at responding holistically to children's needs?) and forincreasing the scale of family and community involvement projects (What can schools do to expand the reach of the project beyond a small sub-group of parents to changes which are schoolwide and in some instances replicated system-wide?).

There are five components of the framework: 1) Schoolwide Agreement, 2) Structural Changes within the Context of the Project Team, 3) Schoolwide Changes, 4) Institutionalizing Changes to the Whole School, and 5) Systemic Changes. The framework — its components, guiding questions, and strategies — are summarized in the table on page 165.

Schoolwide agreement on central importance of family-school-community partnerships to change. To begin the change process, there needs to be some kind of agreement by the school as a whole to the idea that partnerships with families and communities can help schools do their job of educating children better. Often, this agreement can be found in school mission statements. Less traditional mechanisms where agreement has been sought include project proposals and school improvement plans. The agreement, however, needs to be more than a mere slogan. There has to be some substance behind the words. Our project found substance in the presence of an action plan which incorporates diverse perspectives and includes a realistic time commitment to family and community involvement and reflects the multiple voices of the school community.

FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

Components of Framework	Guiding Questions	Strategies
Schoolwide agreement on Family-School-Community Partnerships as locus for change	• What kinds of partnerships do we want to initiate? • Does the school have a long-term commitment to family involvement? • How does the school plan to initiate partnerships?	• Conduct needs and resource assessment • Host a community-wide breakfast • Organize a coordinating council • Craft a master school improvement plan
Structural changes in the context of parent/community involvement project and the action research team	• Has there been time devoted to planning? • Has there been more flexibility in scheduling to allow staff to participate? • Have resources been redirected to support program? If so, what resources have been redirected? • Is there on-going evaluation of the program? • Are there any changes in instructional/curricular practices?	• Commit financial and staffing resources on a small scale first • Expand the responsibilities of teachers and parents • Use team to pilot ideas
Schoolwide participation	• Have other school staff been invited to participate in discussions for expanding programs schoolwide? • Has information about the program and future plans for program expansion been communicated to staff and community schoolwide?	• Provide common planning time for staff • Reassign personnel to expand the scope of services • Develop hiring/retention policies that expand the scope of services
Institutionalizing changes	• Is there a mechanism for shared decision-making to continue plan? • Is there a mechanism for coordinating activities? • Is there a plan for sustained funding? • Is there a plan for on-going "staff" development and training? • Are there any advocacy groups (e.g., parent watchdog groups or a panel of advocates with influential community members) being organized to publicize the school and to bring in more resources to school?	• Encourage peer-to-peer mentoring and joint problem-solving • Hire schools to provide technical assistance and training to other schools • Co-locate services
Systemic changes	• To what extent are family and community members involved in setting school improvement goals? • Are family/community members part of the school staff? • Are there any changes in funding and staffing patterns that support school-level partnerships?	• Write in partnership activities into new sources of funding • Hire family and community members as part of school staff • Involve families and communities in student achievement assessment practices

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Structural changes occuring within a family/community involvement project. Many projects begin with and are focused on a sub-group of parents and teachers at the school. The group can take many forms — an action research team, school improvement council, school-based management team or grade-level committee. The team creates opportunities for the school to pilot a new activity before expanding schoolwide. In the context of the team, schools are in a position to work out the kinks in the design of the program including scheduling for staff, allocation of resources and space, changes in evaluation, and the impact on daily routines. The project found evidence of structural changes to support family-school-community partnerships regarding staffing, scheduling and budget allocations which were tested out first within the family/community involvement program they were studying.

Schoolwide participation. There needs to be involvement or active participation by staff schoolwide. Schoolwide participation does not necessarily mean every teacher and parent is integrally involved in a project. It does mean that a cross-section of the school community is contributing in diverse ways to strengthening family and community involvement. Schoolwide participation can take place through staff meetings, discussions, involvement in developing a schoolwide plan, and involving staff in particular aspects of the program. The project found evidence of schoolwide participation in changes in policies and practices related to personnel, funding, and training which have an impact beyond the project team.

Institutionalizing changes as a permanent part of the whole school. If schools are interested in sustaining a program beyond the work of a few individuals, schoolwide changes need to be institutionalized. When changes are institutionalized, family and community involvement has become a more permanent part of school's funding and governance structure as well as its assessment and instructional practices. It gives schools the flexibility and authority to sustain and expand changes once private foundation funding or other start-up funding has been eliminated and the original leaders of the project have moved on. We have found evidence of changes being institutionalized by mechanisms for sharing decision-making and coordination, for securing new or multiple sources of funding, and for providing on-going cross-role staff development.

Systemic changes at the local, state, and Federal levels. The success of school-based reform is influenced by changes at the local, state and Federal levels. Schools that want to make changes that are comprehensive in scope — addressing the needs of the whole child

and the whole school — need the support of district, state, and Federal policymakers and program administrators.

Changes in district, state, and Federal policy are also needed so that successful practices can be brought to scale and replicated system-wide. There is a common assumption that the first impetus for systemic change is generated outside of schools — via district and state mandates. In fact, the pressure for systemic change can as easily and perhaps more potently come from within schools, which through participatory improvement processes have identified specific ways that the district impedes or supports their efforts. Consequently, this study found early evidence of systemic reform in schools' actions to challenge or support district budgetary decisions, union agreements, and regulations.

Through action research and partnerships-building, schools are challenging the commonly held assumption that school-based change is fragmented, unresponsive, and short-lived. The following section elaborates on strategies in our Framework for Policy Analysis that have been developed and tested by action research teams in the process of school transformation.

Schoolwide Agreement

SCHOOLWIDE AGREEMENT

Carolyn Spurlock, principal of the Fairfield Court Elementary School in Richmond Virginia is working hard with parents and teachers to coordinate school improvement planning efforts. Experience has taught her that reducing duplication of effort can free up staff and other time to actually get the plan to work. So, she has decided to take a "whole school" approach to the planning process. Each year, she joins a small group of parents, teachers, community people within the school to craft the "master school improvement plan." With minor adaptations, this one plan is used for multiple school improvement planning purposes including Chapter 1, a district mandated annual education plan, privately funded project plans, and state reform plans. The key, as Dr. Spurlock explains, is to take a comprehensive, rather than categorical, response to children's needs and to approach the plan not as something static but as a flexible, systematic blueprint.

Traditionally, schoolwide agreements have been defined narrowly. If a project or school reform initiative has principal support and/or the familiar cast of characters have signed on, it is understood that there is agreement for the project to proceed. If we have learned one thing from reforms of the eighties, it is that the development of a mission statement is only the first step in the process of building shared vision. A mission statement may reflect assumptions about shared purposes and values which belie real

consensus. Action research teams have addressed fragmentation of school improvement processes through coordinated participatory approaches to goal setting and planning.

1. Conduct Needs and Resource Assessment

Schools in which there is evidence of broad, sustained commitment to goals of partnership are schools that continuously and systematically assess needs of children and families and identify the in-house and external resources available. These schools have attempted to get past the rhetoric of the mission statements by surveying a cross-section of faculty and parents throughout the school around questions such as the following:

- *Why is there a need for stronger parent and community partnerships at our school?*
- *What do you hope parent and community partnerships will achieve?*
- *What kind of time commitment does our school have to family involvement?*
- *What school, community, and personal resources can be brought to the task?*

Because the scope of the project extends beyond school walls, schools have revamped traditional forms of needs assessment. Some strategies schools have developed include:

a. Hosting a Community-wide Breakfast. In a situation where parents are not necessarily comfortable talking about their needs individually, a community-wide breakfast held at the school provides a public forum where parents can talk together about the needs of their community and garner support from their friends and neighbors. These breakfasts can also afford an opportunity for the Mayor or other city officials to discuss with parents the needs of the community and advocate for the kinds of partnerships being developed in the school.

b. Home Visits. Often, the school is not the most ideal place to interview or survey parents about their needs and the resources they provide. Many parents work during the day and cannot come during school hours. Or, the school is located too far away or parents do not have adequate transportation to the school. Sometimes, parents do not feel welcome or are hindered by their own negative experiences in schools and do not want to come to the school. Whatever the reason, in all cases, parents are still interested in their children's education and want to be involved. Home visits are one way to find out what parents are thinking or needing. Home visitors can interview parents one-on-one when and where it is

convenient and safe for parents to voice their needs and concerns. Particularly effective are home visitors who are parents themselves and can identify with the families they meet.

c. Grassroots/Community-based Organizations. In areas where there is a strong tradition of community organizing, grassroots organizations often have deep roots in the community and have already built up trust with families. Schools have effectively tapped this trust and expertise of grassroots organizations and watchdog groups in doing their needs assessments. These organizations, traditionally thought of as adversaries to schools because of their monitoring activities, have sometimes become partners with schools by providing additional staff, technical assistance, and training through coordination with their own organizing initiatives.

2. Coordinate with other school improvement processes

Coming up with a time-line and assigning responsibility for specific tasks is an obvious but frequently overlooked step to address fragmentation of school improvement processes and for building schoolwide agreement. Time is a precious commodity within schools and unless family and community involvement (a vulnerable priority) is coordinated with other school improvement processes, little will be accomplished. Schools involved in the Parent-Teacher Action Research Project have nurtured schoolwide agreement by integrating and/or coordinating project goal-setting with improvement planning required by their district, state, or private funder.

a. Crafting a Master School Improvement Plan. Because schools receive multiple sources of funding, they often have multiple reporting requirements which cover the same set of activities. Consolidating these reporting requirements into one master school improvement plan cuts down on the duplication of efforts and frees up time to operationalize the objectives spelled out in these reports. A small group of parents, teachers, community people, and the principal (such as an action research team) could easily craft a master plan (including a Title I plan, an annual education plan, a state reform plan, and progress reports to private funding sources) that can be used for multiple planning purposes.

b. Creating a Coordinating Council. To overcome fragmentation of school improvement activities, one strategy to help coordinate activities and keep everyone informed about what is happening in the school is to establish a coordinating council or committee.

This committee is responsible for meeting frequently to plan joint activities and avoid duplication of effort. This committee not only serves a coordinating function, but also builds leadership among families and teachers to assume roles in setting priorities for the whole school based on the needs and resources of families and the community and planning programs and activities accordingly. As a result, the priorities reflect much more than just the principal's vision — they are based on a grounded, shared knowledge of what works.

Structural Changes in Context of Family and Community Involvement Projects

Strengthening family and community involvement can create waves of change within schools by redirecting resources and forcing changes in sensitive areas such as assessment of student achievement. Schools that have taken the time to clearly identify community needs often want to capitalize on early consensus and begin their projects with a big splash — initiating many activities at once. These same schools often find themselves cutting back activities in the face of teacher and community resistance, limited resources, or district regulations. Action research teams have avoided common traditional roadblocks such as lack of space by identifying organizational obstacles and piloting new strategies before expanding schoolwide.

1. Commit financial and staffing resources on a small scale first

Financial and staffing resources are a primary concern of school teams. Federal, state, and district resources can be used to support family and community involvement activities earmarked for other purposes, e.g., paraprofessionals. Redirecting large-scale funds and staffing may raise a few eyebrows within the school and at the central office. Some schools have found it useful to test out ways of financing family and community involvement activities on a small scale

STRUCTURAL CHANGES BEGINNING WITH THE ACTION RESEARCH TEAM

The action research teams at the Anwatin and the Northeast Middle Schools in Minneapolis provided an opportunity for each school to learn about what kinds of parent involvement activities were going to work and which ones weren't. As middle schools, they were already organized into teams of teachers and it was decided that it would be best to focus their attention on one team at first to test out new parent involvement ideas before expanding schoolwide. Not all teachers in the school were ready to accept every parent involvement idea that came down the pipeline, so testing out ideas with one team gave the principal and others interested in parent involvement the information and evidence they needed to persuade the other teams to try out these new ideas.

in the context of the action research team. Title I, Chapter 2, or special education funds, for example, can be used either to hire a small group of part-time home visitors or to pay for part of existing staff time (e.g., a parent coordinator) to coordinate activities. For additional services, other school staff can be enlisted to assist project staff or some members of the existing project staff can be retrained to provide different services.

2. Test out changes in school practice on a small scale first

Curriculum, assessment of student achievement, and decision-making are deep practices with traditions that are not easily changed. Proposed fundamental changes to school practice might best be tested out on a smaller scale first to work out kinks in the design and to build shared ownership on the part of parents and teachers. This way concerns can be addressed and incorporated in the program rather than imposing changes schoolwide with no commitment from parents or teachers.

Changes can be introduced in the lower grades and then expanded one grade level at a time from one year to the next. Or, schools that use team-teaching approaches might introduce changes in one team and then expand one team at a time. This enables the team to identify barriers and modify the changes to make them more responsive.

The action research team also represents an opportunity for restructuring decision-making processes within the school. Teams should include those who are responsible for implementing partnership programs in the design and evaluation of the program, because the implementors bring with them information about what works, what is feasible given the reality of limited resources (rather than in theory), and how the program can be improved. Additionally, team members can draft pieces of a master school improvement plan which shifts decision-making responsibilities about school improvement as it relates to parent involvement to parents and teachers on the action research team.

3. Develop relationships and leadership to support project goals

The action research team creates a context for nurturing the relationships and leadership so essential to project success. The action research process establishes new relationships which garner new respect for skills that parents and teachers bring. Collaborative

working relationships between parents and teachers have enabled projects to influence changes and become more responsive to the contexts of both home and school.

a. Expanding the responsibilities of teachers and parents. Responsibilities of the action research team extend beyond shared decision-making to program planning, implementation, and evaluation. As opposed to a group of people who come together solely around governance issues, action research team members interact regularly with one another and have hands-on knowledge of what goes on in the school. This knowledge is used to create more responsive programs and resources by updating existing materials that schools use to reach out to families, creating new materials, or identifying new partners and resources that expand the scope of existing programs.

A number of schools used the structure of the team to groom individual members to take on responsibilities traditionally assumed by principals, project facilitators, or directors. Team members assumed responsibility for crafting proposals to fund their ideas, identifying key priorities based on the needs/strengths assessments of families, developed programs that responded to these needs, and evaluated their effectiveness. The team created a supportive context where parents and teachers could take the initiative and get constructive feedback on their efforts. In a number of schools, the team created a climate that was different from that of the rest of the school — where parents and teachers experience first-hand the benefits collaboration brings to children.

Schoolwide Participation

After a period of testing out new strategies, action research teams have collected a great deal of evidence about strategies that work and their impact on classroom practice and student/family outcomes. This generation of knowledge can either spur enthusiasm and interest on

SCHOOLWIDE PARTICIPATION

In many schools, the principal selects the same group of teachers and parents to represent their colleagues and peers on school-based management teams, task forces, and the PTA. Believing that home-school-community partnerships are everyone's concern, Fairfield Court Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia has taken a different approach to building participation. When the school decided to revamp its parent program, the call was put out to the entire community. There were discussions in faculty meetings, a neighborhood pancake breakfast (which the mayor attended) was held to recruit the broader community, parent volunteers spread the word in their home visits with families. This strategy has had good results. The action research team has close to twenty-eight active members. The team is organized into subcommittees to enable parents and teachers and others to bring their wisdom and experience to issues that they care about.

the part of colleagues and other parents or it can create jealousy and resentment toward those who are initiating changes. Without schoolwide participation, there is little shared ownership over reform, and what commonly happens is that the majority of school staff excuse themselves from participation due to lack of time while the hard work of action research team members is marginalized and forgotten. To prevent the latter from happening, schools have redefined policy in key areas such as funding, training, and personnel.

1. Redefining policy in order to extend the reach of services

Schools participating in Parent-Teacher Action Research projects have found that school, district, and state policies reinforce categorical rather than comprehensive approaches to family and community involvement. In order to expand the scope of services, they have found it necessary to redefine and reinterpret policies to support program goals.

a. Providing common planning time for staff. With time being such a limited resource, schools have to think differently about time to enable collaborations to happen. Daily common planning time for teachers involved in collaborating with parents surfaces as a consistent need, especially when partnerships fundamentally alter school practices such as assessment and curriculum. Restructuring the day so that parents or paraprofessionals are responsible for supervising students during lunch break or recess frees teachers' time to meet together and plan. Similarly, the benefits of weekly planning time for members of the action research team provides evidence for the need to create weekly planning time for the whole school. Thus, principals and directors can justify changing the schedule to accommodate a common planning period for staff.

b. Reassigning personnel to expand the scope of services. Action research can help the whole school identify how to restructure the use of personnel to expand the scope of services. Based on needs identified through action research, principals and staff may choose to reassign or redefine the positions of paraprofessionals, such as mentors or home visitors, in order to provide additional staffing for expanded activities.

c. Developing hiring/retention policies that reflect commitment to partnerships. Schools with authority over hiring and retention of staff (including the principal) can use this authority to develop policies that reflect a commitment to family-school-community partnerships. Interview committees can include parents and teachers in hiring and

recommending staff that demonstrate their commitment to building partnerships. This enables the school to build a whole staff willing to expand the reach of services.

2. Leadership Development

The action research team builds leadership skills among parents and teachers that can be used to build participation schoolwide. In situations where there is resistance or some hesitation to engage in different roles, team members can be valuable resources for breaking down resistance and addressing concerns directly. This can be accomplished in a number of ways:

a. Peer-to-peer mentoring and joint problem-solving. Mentors, home visitors, teachers, and parent workers on the action research team all have knowledge and skill in creating partnerships. They can act as peer mentors that pass on this expertise to their colleagues and address issues or concerns that their colleagues raise. Peer mentors are important resources because they have already been through the process and can identify with the concerns of their colleagues. In fact, many of them may have confronted the same issues, but have worked through them, and can offer their experience to ease others' concerns.

b. Technical assistance and training. Making the transition from a small-scale project to a schoolwide one can be rough; however, team members can act as an important bridge of continuity by providing technical assistance and training. As a school expands its home visiting program or mentoring program, team members can train their successors based on their grounded experience of what has worked in that particular community. Team members can also provide ongoing assistance for identifying community resources and recordkeeping strategies.

3. Use community partners to expand practices

When first expanding schoolwide, it is difficult to get the district to change its funding priorities to accommodate the expansion activities of schools. Therefore, teams find themselves looking elsewhere in the community to provide needed financial and in-kind resources.

a. Tapping a local business partner. For schools with a business partner, business-school partnerships provide an additional resource for schools strapped financially or by regulations that prevent them from expanding services schoolwide. A business partner can fund existing staff or equipment or provide flex time for employees to participate in school activities. Local businesses can also recruit employees to volunteer in the school as additional staff (e.g., mentors, tutors, lunch-time supervisors).

b. Co-locating services. In a community without social service and health agencies nearby, schools can become a locus for co-locating services that extends the services offered to families and the community. By locating in the school, services can be coordinated with other changes in the school. Health education can be integrated with actual services to provide students with a comprehensive approach to health. Paraprofessional staff, such as home visitors or parent educators, can serve as liaisons to community agencies by providing families with information and referrals to agencies. Parents can inform the school about resources in the community that can be shared schoolwide through a parent center, home visits, or newsletter.

Institutionalizing Changes

Extending the scope of services and partnerships schoolwide depends upon the extent to which these activities and principles become a permanent part of the school's priorities, funding, and curriculum. Traditionally, parent and community involvement is talked about as an extraneous activity to the fundamental business of school: educating children. Involvement is marginalized by major shifts in funding and staffing priorities and also by seemingly small shifts in use of space and time to encourage teachers and parents to meet and plan. Schools have addressed these and other obstacles through more comprehensive approaches to funding.

INSTITUTIONALIZING CHANGES

The Family Outreachers of the O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, Massaschusetts are a group of about a dozen parents who make visits to families who have never been to the school. In addition to their regular monthly meetings, the team holds an off-site retreat twice a year to reflect on their progress and plan next steps. The team's determination that there needed to be more coordination of parent involvement activities schoolwide led to the creation of the Family Leadership Council. Representatives on the council include current volunteer coordinators of various parent activities, such as the parent center, two teachers, and three parent representatives from the school-based management team. The council sets schoolwide priorities for parent involvement and has authority over the family center budget.

1. Write partnership activities into new sources of funding

Schools that wish to institutionalize changes need to think about partnership activities as strategies for achieving specific objectives rather than as the object of funding. Title I, Even Start, Healthy Start, Head Start, and Youth Development programs are just some examples of funding sources where schools can write in partnership activities as strategies for accomplishing program objectives such as family education, after-school programs, or communicating with families. Schools that are required to demonstrate how they will communicate with families under Title I, for example, can write in home visits (and training of home visitors) as strategies for improving home-school communication. Schools that are funded to expand their family literacy efforts can integrate their home visiting components as a strategy for disseminating home learning activities.

INSTITUTIONALIZING CHANGES

The Boxes for Babes program in Ferguson-Florissant School District (MO) is an example of a local program that creatively combines funding from private, district, state, and Federal monies to expand its home visiting program for "at-risk" families. Realizing that there was a link between encouraging positive parent-child interactions to prevent language/developmental delays and encouraging family literacy and education, Marion Wilson, the Director for Early Education, incorporated part of Boxes for Babes into an Even Start grant to hire an additional parent educator from the district's literacy program for the Boxes for Babes program.

2. Involve families and communities in student achievement assessment practices

With recent trends toward supplementing traditional forms of assessing student achievement (e.g., test scores), many schools and districts are moving toward authentic forms of assessment such as portfolios, exhibitions, and recording teachers' observations in journals. Partnerships can become a central vehicle for implementing specific assessment strategies. Families and teachers together can help develop portfolios by providing ideas for how portfolios should be designed to make them meaningful and understandable and what should go into each portfolio. Teachers and parents can both keep journals on the progress their children are making. The team of people who evaluate exhibitions could include community and business members who can evaluate how the skills and knowledge that students demonstrate are relevant to the world outside school walls.

3. Hire family and community members as part of school staff

Partnership activities demonstrate how family and community members can support teachers, school counselors, and other staff as teachers' aides, community outreach workers, career counselors, and tutors; however, their time is often tenuous because they are volunteers. One way to solidify their presence is to hire them as part of the school staff. Discretionary funds can be used to provide stipends that enable family and community members to afford to work for the school, but eventually they could be more permanently written into the school budget under paraprofessional status.

Systemic Changes

While schools have some degree of latitude in making decisions about school improvement, they operate within a context of district, state, and Federal policies that can constrict or enable them to develop partnerships. For the most part, changes in district, state, and Federal policies appear possible only when initiated by the mayor's office, the state legislature, or the U.S. Congress; however, our Parent-Teacher Action Research project illustrates the need for a new kind of policymaking that is grounded and informed by the knowledge that is being generated by schools. Action research is a process that produces a great deal of information about what works and what gets in the way, and policymakers can capitalize on this opportunity to make more flexible and responsive policies. Until this new kind of policymaking is in place, top-down mandates will continue to be challenged by people in schools.

1. Use action research for advocacy purposes

Team members, with their evidence in hand, can act as advocates at school board meetings for increased funding and better facilities. Action research can also help schools inform or challenge district-wide plans that affect partnerships at the school level, such as school closings or hiring and transfer of school staff. By using action research, schools can advocate for creating continuity in staff required to establish partnerships.

2. Use action research to justify waivers to district or state regulations

For schools under site-based management, the waiver process is one place where schools can use information from their action research project to challenge regulations (e.g., how long the school building can stay open, who the school can hire and retain, and funding priorities). Union contracts, regulations about school hours, and state and Federal categorical eligibility requirements create roadblocks to building partnerships. While the waiver process impedes school-based decision-making, action research can provide schools with information to clarify their roles and authority by challenging top-down mandates.

3. Use action research to extend the reach and scope of partnerships districtwide

Districts that are interested in expanding partnerships either because of state or Federal mandates or because they believe in the idea, can call on schools using action research to help them plan and implement parent involvement policies and activities. Schools can inform districts of potential challenges and possible strategies based on their experiences and their research on what works. Schools can also train other school teams and provide consultations or technical assistance. This school-to-school exchange is valuable, may be less costly than hiring outside "experts," and can provide continued training and support that is grounded in the experiences of schools.

These strategies illustrate how schools can take an active role in removing obstacles to action research and family-school-community partnerships. The extent to which school-based improvements can result in systemic change, however, requires redefining the role of districts in supporting school change. In the following section, we discuss some obstacles at the district level that have made action research and partnerships unnecessarily difficult, and we identify some initial recommendations that policymakers at the district level can undertake to enable schools to develop school improvement processes that are coordinated and comprehensive.

District-Level Obstacles and Recommendations for Action Research and Family-School-Community Partnerships

This report is filled with anecdotes about how school communities can design school improvement initiatives that improve the quality of the relationship between home and school. This report has highlighted what schools can do to strengthen these connections within schools; however, the success of these efforts depends on changes in the relationships between schools and districts.

In our interviews with district and state-level policymakers as well as with the principals and action research teams at each site, we found that the development of action research and family-school-community partnerships within schools was often hindered by policies and actions at the district level. These obstacles included: 1) a lack of clarity about roles around school change, 2) lack of information about availability and comprehensive use of funding, 3) lack of continued training and support for schools, and 4) discontinuity in staffing. Without district support, the efforts of families, communities, and schools working in partnership are limited, making it difficult for changes to be institutionalized and expanded system-wide.

Lack of Clarity about Roles around School Change

All of the schools in this study have some kind of a school-based decision-making council or team that has varying degrees of authority over school operations. At first glance, it would seem that school-based decision-making, family and community partnerships, and action research are complimentary processes. However, what we often found was a lack of clarity between what kinds of authority or discretion schools had and what the district was responsible for. This constricted the extent to which schools could use the information generated by their school teams to expand the scale and scope of their partnerships with families and communities. Districts and schools need a better understanding of their respective roles to avoid duplication of effort and undercutting of each other's authority. Without this clarity, schools were continually running into formal, written regulations or unwritten district-set priorities that ran counter to the comprehensive partnerships they were trying to establish with families and communities. This undermined the spirit and intent of school-based decision-making and action research.

One common example of lack of clarity is the time-consuming process of obtaining waivers, which limits the authority schools actually have under reform. A few of the schools in this project have had to apply for waivers for any decision that fundamentally altered school policies such as enrollment, scheduling, use of personnel, and hiring. Rather than encouraging schools to use information generated through their own process, like action research, to make policy and improvements in their school, the waiver process sends a message that schools are not capable of making decisions and must go to the district to obtain permission to make improvements in their school. Waivers suggest that school decisions are "exceptions to the rule" rather than a signal to the district that their policies are restrictive and in need of revision. Action research provides districts with information about what is and is not working; yet, few take advantage of this opportunity.

Districts have much to gain by utilizing the information generated by action research. When schools' decision-making authority is devalued, as the waiver process implies, districts fail to capitalize on the information about what is working in practice and, subsequently, make or change policies that limit collaboration at the school level. Districts can move beyond micromanagement of school routines by:

- Giving schools the authority and flexibility to schedule priorities, allocate staff time, and use space so that time and space can be more effectively planned and used according to the particular needs of their community.
- Planning the use of facilities and the construction of new buildings with adequate equipment (such as computers, phone lines, and furniture) that enable activities like family centers to become a permanent part of school architecture.
- Identifying and eliminating blanket school regulations such as mandating closing times for all schools that unnecessarily impede collaboration.

Lack of Information about Availability and Comprehensive Use of Funding

Funding patterns can have a significant impact on the quality of partnerships created at the school level. Funding patterns under Title I are illustrative. Although the 1988 amendments to Title I specified the use of funds for parent involvement, many districts still continued to discourage schools from using those funds for anything other than instructional services. When principals appealed to the district to use funds to develop partnerships with

parents, they were repeatedly told that parent involvement was not the priority of the district or, in the worse cases, that it was illegal to use Title I funds for parent involvement.

One of the most significant developments in the Title I legislation has been the establishment of Schoolwide projects, which enables schools with a high concentration of poverty to use Title I resources comprehensively (for all students in the school) rather than categorically, through the development of a school improvement plan. The comprehensive use of Title I funds extends the reach and scope of programs that otherwise would result in fragmented services. A number of schools involved in the Parent-Teacher Action Research project who were eligible for Schoolwide status under Federal guidelines were discouraged and/or prevented from taking advantage of this option. Inquiring principals were told that the option was too expensive for the district or that other schools needed it more. Perhaps most disturbing was the ungrounded argument that the Schoolwide approach to Title I would divert money away from children.

The results of these seemingly arbitrary funding restrictions were (1) fewer resources available for expanding partnerships, and (2) the fragmentation of services. At least, through the school improvement plan required under Schoolwide status, Title I gives incentives to bring parents and teachers together to develop a clear, common vision for school change. Schools also have more flexibility to use Title I funds to strengthen collaboration rather than reinforce categorization of parents, students, and teachers. Unfortunately, many districts have been slow to recognize the value of a schoolwide improvement process for building family and community involvement.

Districts can provide opportunites for schools to access and use funding for comprehensive purposes by:

- Relaxing categorical requirements to enable schools to draw from multiple sources of funding to support inclusive, family-centered programs.
- Increasing the number of Title I Schoolwide projects to encourage schoolwide planning and initiatives. [Although the Federal legislation lowers the eligibility for Schoolwide status from 74% to 50% by FY 1997, districts still have the authority to determine how many of their schools are actually accorded this status.]
- Combining funding across Federal and state initiatives for programs that cross particular grade levels — for example, from preschool to elementary school and from the elementary to the secondary level.

- Developing joint RFPs that provide financial incentives for school staff, social service and health providers, and community members to plan and solve problems collaboratively.

Lack of Continued Training and Support

To develop an on-going school improvement process, schools need training in how to identify their own needs and resources and how to plan and manage programs accordingly. While districts may disseminate information about ideas and strategies, this information is often divorced from the specific contexts of individual schools.

Instead of providing schools with support and training in methods for gathering information about their needs and using this information to create a school improvement plan, much district-led training is limited to managing team dynamics and running effective meetings. Thus, the action research schools that had advanced beyond the start-up process of getting a team together and setting ground rules for the team had little support to conduct needs/strengths assessments, plan and design programs for the school, and manage and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs.

Because family and community involvement for many districts did not evolve beyond providing basic information, individual teachers and parents had to turn to each other or elsewhere (such as the other action research schools and IRE staff) to get new ideas for moving beyond the initial steps, including how to train their parent home visitors, innovative strategies for getting information from parents, and how to involve teachers who are more resistant to partnerships. In many ways, the action research schools were pioneers in developing new kinds of partnerships with families and community members, but were rarely recognized and supported by the district for their innovative efforts. This was particularly true when schools sought funding from their district to continue their efforts (as opposed to start a new program) — they were unsuccessful in obtaining continuation grants despite the mounting evidence from their action research teams about the gains being made for children.

To support schools in their efforts to evaluate and implement new innovations, districts can:

- Hire school teams as trainers for other schools in the district to provide technical assistance and training that taps the significant expertise of schools.

- Convene cross-agency councils to identify common system-level issues, develop comprehensive solutions that link school reform with the restructuring of health and social services, and combine resources to support these solutions.

- Integrate reporting requirements of different programs that encourage educators from different grade levels to define common goals and to share information about student needs.

Discontinuity in Staffing

The relationships that are fundamental to improved student learning are not formed in a day, or even a year. The mistrust that has traditionally divided parents and school staff can only be displaced when those involved in the collaboration know that their relationships have a future. This continuity is particularly important for low-income families who cannot count on other forms of stability such as adequate income and housing. District policies, however, have had the effect of undermining these critical relationships either through frequent or untimely transfers of key personnel or through short funding cycles that discontinue the life of successful partnerships.

In the Parent-Teacher Action Research project, we have observed a pattern — sustained family and community involvement in schools factors little into decisions about human resources. In a few cases, principals, teachers, and even some district administrators who have been instrumental in developing and supporting family-school-community partnerships are often the first selected for transfer or even demotion to another school, position, or grade level. Parents experience this kind of dislocation in added ways when their children are reassigned to new schools or a home visitor is moved to a new classroom.

Before investment in family and community involvement can really take root and grow, individuals are pulled from their current positions and are asked to begin anew with a new group of staff, children, or parents. Schools struggling to extend these partnerships to the whole school are confronted by loss of experienced teachers, home visitors, or parent workers. These people are key to building an important bridge for expansion by providing training, insight, and their experiences to help newer staff and families come on board.

Districts can address the discontinuity in staffing by:

- Having school teams make decisions about hiring and retention based on the needs of the school and students.
- Giving school communities the authority to reassign staff around collaborative activities that integrate programs rather than along categorical lines.
- Making parent and community involvement a part of the performance evaluation criteria for retention of teachers and administrators.

The challenges and recommendations indicated above are only a sampling of what we found in the common experiences among the participating schools. Overall, schools indicated that action research was an involved process which helped them to make sense of the goals and strategies they were attempting in their school improvement and partnership ventures. One of the benefits of family and community partnerships and the process of action research is the generation and use of information about the needs of the whole child and about what works to make flexible and responsive policies and programs. Action research teams learned a process that enabled them to address pressing priorities and to solve problems that were paramount to them. The team afforded an opportunity for meaningful collaboration to occur between parents and teachers that altered the roles each played in school improvement and with each other. Finally, action research provided the evidence some schools needed to advocate for changes in district or school board policies that threatened the development of these important relationships created between parents, teachers, and, in many cases, the community.

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APPENDIX A.1

PATHS

Parents and Teachers Heading for Success Projects

Anwatin Middle School

Issues or Concerns

Generated in the Meeting on 2-24-92

Communication

1 Communication between parents and teachers

2 Students hearing the same messages from school and home

3 Involving students in the communication between parents and teachers

4 Hostility in the communication between parents and teachers

5 Weekly report from school to home

7 Positive interaction between parents and teachers

8 Parents' and teachers' expectation of each other

9 Parents contact teachers
Parents may tell teachers when and by what telephone numbers teachers can reach them

10 Voice mail - a general information line by which parents can get current information about the school

11 The mail from school to home

12 Positive feedback with constructive criticism between parents and teachers

13 Barriers to communication between parents and teachers should be considered

Curriculum

1 Extra help for students with learning difficulties

2 Career goal planning - the relevancy of curriculum to the life of students in the future

3 The developmentally appropriate activities for students at school

4 Learning styles of students

Descision Making

1 Involving students in the planning of their education

Expectations

1 Realistic expectation of students given the wide range of variety of students

2 Agreement of parents, teachers and students on the expectation of students' performance and desirable learning environment

The agreement should be concise and precise

3 Parents' and teachers' expectation of each other

Extra-Curriculm Activities

1 After school curriculum

2 The developmentally appropriate activities for students at school

Safety

1 Safety of students at school - fight or gang problems

Self Esteem

1. Self esteem of students

PATHS
Parents and Teachers Heading for Success Project
Northeast Middle School

Issues or Concerns
Generated in the Meeting on 2-20-92

Attendance

1. attendance - tardiness
2. attendance improvement - going to school is important

Communication

1. teachers meet parents other than conference times.
2. system to let parents know when kids don't do homework or any school work.
3. communication with parents about reward systems.
4. parents should have input re: reward systems.
5. students write own notices to home.
6. need more phones so parents can get hold of teachers in a timely fashion.
7. a couple of assignments a year that parents and students do homework together.
8. comfort for adult-to-adult communication.
9. important to kids for listening to each other.
10. outside classroom communication comfort.
11. to find out more about child, keeping up with what my child is doing.
12. communication on a positive/negative level.
13. parents letting teachers know what they see as working or not.
15. parents coming into class and sharing.
16. communications about homework
17. note about absences asking for work missed
18. what to do with school bus problems, communication back from schools.
19. communication
    home visit < - > school visit
    feeling welcome
    what's happening
    good news
    discipline - expectation
    how to get information
    more and clearer communication

Curriculum

1. admires sex education being presented to students/increase communication.
2. parents coming into class and sharing.
3. parent talents and sharing/culture traditions/jobs

Decision Sharing

1. parents should have input re: reward systems.
2. when movies are shown parents should help in selection of movies.
3. activities and field trips that include planning and input from students.
4. goal setting
   team and individual teachers all meet with parent together

Discipline

1. kid's discipline problems affecting other children.
2. what to do with school bus problems, communication back from schools.

Homework

1. more homework assignments
2. a couple of assignments a year that parents and students do homework together.
3. system to let parents know when kids don't do homework or any school work
4. space release days throughout year and have homework when they are on those break.
5. motivation - keeping student interest in work, communications with school/parent on school work/homework.

Motivation

1. incentive program for work
2. parents just showing up at school

Out of School Time

1. extra curricular activities after school - out of school time

free time	talents & hobbies	
sleep habits	study habits	health concerns
jobs	reading habits	crisis

APPENDIX A.2

A Newsletter from N.E. Middle School

Family Line

Connecting Home, School and Community

October 1993

FROM THE PRINCIPAL . . .

Welcome to Northeast Middle School. As a middle school staff, we believe in the existence of an educational institution in which sixth through eighth grade students can develop their self-esteem and skills to be academically successful.

We recognize early adolescence as a time of special emotional and educational needs. The design of our program meets those needs with interdisciplinary teams, flexible grouping, option/exploratory classes, homeroom advisory programs and a balance of an academic/study skills/social skills curriculum.

The instructional program focuses on three major goals: personal development, skills for continued learning, and an introduction to the areas of organized knowledge. Instruction is personalized as much as possible and students' progress continuously at their own rates. Cooperative learning is used. The job of the middle school is to provide a bridge between the nurturing and support of the elementary classroom and the independence and self-discipline required at the senior high level.

Parents/guardians have the greatest impact on their children's attitudes toward school. If parents/guardians view education as important, the chance that their child will be successful increases. That is why a strong home-school partnership is important. We are committed to parental involvement in the educational process.

Parents/Guardians: Please accept this invitation to stay involved in your child's education. Your involvement is as important as it was during the elementary school years. Let's all work together to make this a great year.

Larry Lucio
Principal

Mini-Clinic Opens at Northeast

Room 101 at Northeast Middle School is now the location of a school-based health clinic. Current services available are a Health Educator on Tuesday, a Nurse Practitioner on Wednesday mornings, and a Social Worker on Thursday mornings. This staff is available for counseling, health teaching, physical exams, immunizations, exams for minor health concerns such as strep throat, ear infections, and other health issues.

Permits to use the clinic must be signed by a parent or guardian, and are available in the Health Office at Northeast. Students can be referred to the clinic by themselves, parents, or staff at Northeast. We expect to expand services further in the future and more information will be given to you when other services are in place. If you have questions, please call 627-3037 and ask for Ms. Westbrook.

IMMUNIZATION POLICY

A second MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) immunization is required by State law for all 7th and 8th graders. Any student who has not had this shot by October 25th, will not be able to attend school until he/she has the shot and the Health Office has received proof of immunization.

The school mini-clinic can administer immunizations if we have consent forms signed. Call 627-3042, JoAnn Sudduth, Health Service Asst. or Charlotte Jensen, School Nurse, if you have questions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

From the Health Office

Is your teenager getting enough sleep?

Probably not, according to research done on Adolescent Sleepiness. Most teens need 8-10 hours of sleep each night, and with early school starting times, it is very difficult for them to get that much sleep. With loss of sleep each night, teenagers can get sleep deficit by the end of the school week so they are less alert, have trouble staying awake in class, and may do poorer in school. What can you to help?

-- Encourage bedtimes between 9:00-9:30 on school nights. If your child stays up until 11 pm, start by gradually getting him/her to sleep 15-20 minutes earlier at night for a week, then 15-20 minutes earlier the next week, etc.

-- Allow your student to take a 30-45 minute nap after school to catch up on lost sleep in the morning. Longer naps may make it tough to get to sleep later that night.

-- Let your teenager "sleep-in" on weekends. Getting up at 9 or 10 a.m. is not a sign of laziness, it is a signal that your child is catching up on lost sleep.

TUBERCULOSIS SURVEY

Northeast is one of 4 middle schools in Minneapolis who have been asked to participate in a survey to see if tuberculosis is increasing in the general population at a rate which would require routine testing of all students. This survey only involves 8th grade students.

A team of nurses from the Hennepin County Health Dept. will be at Northeast on October 26 & 28 to do the Mantoux testing and reading. Parent permission is required before testing can be done. Consent forms explaining the program will be mailed to each 8th grader's home. All students who participate in the full program will be given a voucher for an Extra-Value meal at McDonald's.

Call Charlotte Jensen, School Nurse, at 627-3042, if you have questions.

I Can Make A Difference

This is the theme of the international exhibit, Anne Frank in the World, 1929-1945, on display in St. Paul, August 27-October 8. All the Northeast students have had an opportunity to tour the exhibit. AT&T, our business partner, has funded the buses for this trip.

The exhibit used the story of Anne Frank to explore diversity, past and present. Teachers were provided with interdisciplinary curriculum to use before, during and after the exhibit. The purpose of the curriculum was to help students explore issues of discrimination and ways they can "make a difference." Please discuss the exhibit and the related curriculum with your child.

Special Education at Northeast

Special education at Northeast Middle School is one of the unique aspects of the Middle School philosophy we adhere to. Our philosophy is that students are not Special Education students but rather, regular education students with special needs. To that end we address their special needs through collaboration between both regular and special educators. A special educator is an integral member of each team to discuss special needs of any student of concern to the team, to work with his/her team to find and implement alternative academic and behavioral strategies to help those students succeed in school.

Colleen Ryan is our Special Education Coordinator. Colleen is our expert when it comes to the processing of the many due process forms. As a state auditor for the Department of Special Education, Colleen travels to various school districts to assess their compliance with due process.

Cheryl Finger, our Behavior Specialist, supports not only the special educators for each team through aid in problem-solving, but also the regular educators. Cheryl is a general resource for classroom management and academic/behavioral strategies for new and veteran teachers alike school-wide. She will be working with individual and groups of students to help them focus on academic and behavior goals as their individual needs dictate.

We are fortunate to have these two leaders in our Special Ed. department.

The Gathering Place Seeks Volunteers

The Gathering Place is a community building initiative taking place in the courtyard between our two buildings, and "It's time to build."

Join the 4-day building extravaganza and festivities. Parents, students, teachers, and community are invited to work, eat, and celebrate community. If you have carpentry skills the Gathering Place needs you. The dates for building are from Friday, October 8th through Monday October 11th. Work will proceed from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. If you can contribute one hour or 40 hours, please call today (627-3042). Donated time is tax deductible!

Also needed is everyone's skills: a pot-luck dish, hammering, seamstresses, kitchen help, and registration attendents. There is a place for everyone and every skill. Call today, 627-3058. Child care will be available. SEE YOU THERE!

Community members from LaMere Construction and Flittie Concrete work with students to pour concrete art for the Gathering Place.
Pictured are Lee Hines, Jevin Reynolds, Domnick McElroy, Gretta Hunstiger, Jay Miller from Flittie Concrete.

COMMUNITY ED CORNER

It's too late to sign up for Community Education fall Programs. Not!

Middle School Youth Activities

Although many classes and programs have started, it's not too late to sign up! After-school activities for middle school youth include: sports, theater, video, homework help, Girl Scouts, and community service. Youth in Minneapolis After-school Program (Y-MAP) has activities at locations all around the city. Classes are free or very low cost! There are also citywide basketball and bowling programs. This fall, Y-MAP also added Outreach Workers to its staff for recruitment and program development.

For information about Y-MAP, in Northeast Minneapolis call: LuAnn Wilcox or VeeAnn Beutler at 627-3058
In North Minneapolis call: Sheri Gray at 374-4342

Children and Adult Activities

There are over 150 programs and enrichment classes for children and adults starting October 4th in Northeast Community Schools. Classes include swimming, computers, languages, cooking, home improvement and hobbies and crafts. Come on down and join the fun. Celebrate the fact that learning never stops!

For information about adult and children's activities, call:
Northeast 627-3058
Waite Park: 627-3077
Holland: 627-3065

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APPENDIX A.3

Homework Hotline

Team A . . . 627-3053

YOU CAN HEAR A RECORDED UPDATE OF HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS AND TEAM ACTVITIES .

Homework Hotline

Aquatics	627-3153*	Dolphins	627-3157*
Calypso	627-3170*	Cirrus	627-3154*
Gaia	627-3156*	Ozone	627-3167*
Sequoia	627-3163		

YOU CAN HEAR A

RECORDED UPDATE OF

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS AND

TEAM ACTVITIES .

* These phone numbers might be changed. Any new numbers will go into effect the end of November and will be published in the Newsletter.

APPENDIX A.4

We are

a group of parents and teachers from Northeast Middle School. With a strong belief that parents and teachers working together will provide the best learning environment for children, we formed the Parents and Teachers Heading for Success (**PATHS**) team.

You are

the most significant person in the life of your child. Your involvement in his or her education is invaluable. One of the goals of the **PATHS** team this year is to involve more parents or guardians in school activities. We sincerely invite you to spend some time (an hour or a day) at Northeast Middle School with your child and other students.

Your presence

will provide tremendous support to both the teachers and the students, and let all the students know that parents are on board.

Northeast Middle School

Return

this slip to us now. Your child will bring this slip to us and earn a ticket for raffle. After we get your return slip, we shall contact you as soon as possible to arrange for your visit.

What would you like to do in school?

(You may check more than one box)

- ❒ observe in class or school (7:15am-1:45pm)
- ❒ help with classroom (7:15am-1:45pm)
- ❒ help with library (7:15am-1:45pm)
- ❒ help with school office (6:30am-3:30pm)
- ❒ help with lunch room/home room (10:30am-11:15pm)
- ❒ ride school bus with students (ask your child for the time)
- ❒ be a guest speaker (7:15am-1:45pm)
  topic:_____
  _____
- ❒ help with field trip (flexible time)
- ❒ help with breakfast (7:00am-7:20am)
- ❒ help with school store (7:00am-7:20am)
- ❒ help with afterschool activities (1:45-4:15pm)
- ❒ help with the Gathering Place Project (flexible time, call for more information)
- ❒ others:_____
  _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Phone (Home): _____

Phone (Work): _____

Best time to call or make home visit: _____

Name of your child: _____

If you have any question about the visit, please call the teachers of your child at 627-3038 or Ms. Claudette Thompson at 627-3050.

APPENDIX A.5

Northeast Middle School
Team A
Celebration of Community

Parents and family members are invited. Come spend a morning with your child and the team.

Continental Breakfast - coffee, tea, punch, cookies.

TIME: 1st - 3rd hour (7:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.)
DATE: Thursday, February 10th

Transportation will be provided - to and from school - by Blue and White taxi. Taxi's will pick up at 7:05 a.m.

Please return this form to school with your child .

Student name: _____ Parent name:_____

❑ Will be able to attend.

❑ Will be able to attend, and need transportation.

To reserve a TAXI for you, this form must be returned by Tuesday, February 8th.

Address: _____

Phone: _____

❑ Will not be able to attend.

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APPENDIX A.6

Dear parents, if your answers to these questions are yes, we cordially invite you to join the Parents and Teachers Heading for Success (**PATHS**) project.

What is PATHS?

The **PATHS** project is one of the many activities in the Partnership for School Success Program. Partnership for School Success Program is a dropout prevention program at Anwatin Middle School.

What is our goal?

The goal of the **PATHS** project is to bring parents and teachers together to promote a successful learning environment for youth.

What have we done?

The **PATHS** team at Anwatin Middle School started in December 1991. The parents and teachers in the team identified issues which have great impact on the educational well-being of the students at Anwatin. Together we implemented an action plan to address one of these issues. Last year we worked on the issue of communication between parents and teachers. To create a direct communication link between home and classroom, we installed telephones and answering machines in the **PATHS** teacher's classroom. This year parents of students on the Gaia team can call the hot-line for any concerns about their children.

You are the consultants!

The **PATHS** project relies on your knowledge and contribution. Both you and the teachers are the consultants to the Partnership for School Success Program. Therefore, you will be paid for your involvement. We provide child care and some transportation for every monthly meeting.

How to participate?

If you are interested in working with your child's teachers in the **PATHS** team, please fill out the form in this pamphlet. Return the form in the enclosed envelope (no stamp needed) or have your child return it to his/her teachers before 10-6-92. As we have to limit the size of the team, we will honor requests on a first come first serve basis. Fill out the form now!

When is our first meeting?

Our first meeting in this year is at
Sabathani Community Center
Rm D2, 310 East 38th Street
October 12 (Monday)
6:30 - 8:30 pm

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the **PATHS** project, please contact the teachers of your child at school or Ms Shui Fong Lam, the facilitator of the **PATHS** project at 626-7941.

Anwatin Middle School

PATHS

Parents And Teachers
Heading for Success
Parent Application Form

We invite you to join the **PATHS** project and work with the teachers of your child to promote a successful learning environment for all the students in Anwatin Middle School.
Please fill out this form and return it before 10-6-92. We will contact you as soon as possible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Phone (Home): _____

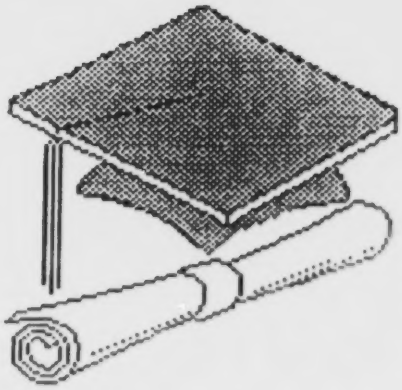
Phone (Work): _____

Name of your child: _____

Your relation to the student:
❒ Mother ❒ Step-mother ❒ Aunt/Uncle
❒ Father ❒ Step-father ❒ Grandparent
❒ Others _____

APPENDIX A.7

PATHS



Parents and Teachers Heading for Success
Anwatin Middle School

Welcome to the first meeting of the 1994!

DATE: Thursday, January 27th

TIME: 6:00 - 8:00 pm

PLACE: Anwatin Middle School
256 Upton Avenue South
Room #401

Dinner will be served and transportation are provided. If you have any questions, please call David Evelo at 626-1724.

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PATHS
Parents and Teachers Heading for Success
Project

Just a friendly reminder !

The next meeting of the **PATHS** project is scheduled at Kenwood Recreation Center, 2101 West Franklin on January 29th (Wednesday) at 6:30 pm. Kenwood Recreation Center is next to Kenwood Elementary School by the Lake of Isles. This is a planning meeting and the teachers from both Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools will attend. A formal agenda of the meeting will be delivered to you by the beginning of next week. Food will be served in the meeting. If you have any queries or suggestions, feel free to contact me at 626-1724 or 331-7102.

See you on next Wednesday!

Shui Fong

APPENDIX A.8

Guest Presenter Evaluation

Partnership for School Success (1992)

Student Form

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Neutral = 3.0
Disagree = 4.0
Strongly Disagree = 5.0

N = 150

Directions:	Please read each statement and circle the letters:
SA ...	if you Strongly Agree
A ...	if you Agree
N ...	for Neutral if you do not agree or disagree
D ...	if you Disagree
SD ...	if you Strongly Disagree

MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	
1.8	**0.8**	1. I enjoyed the "guest presentation" by _____. (name of guest presenter)
4.1	**1.0**	2. The students did not learn anything new from the "guest presenter."
2.5	**0.9**	3. The students are more motivated since the "guest presenter" visited class.
2.1	**1.0**	4. The "guest presenter" made the lesson more meaningful.
1.8	**1.0**	5. I would like to have a "guest presenter" in my other classes.

Guest Presenter Evaluation

Partnership for School Success (1992)

Teacher Form

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Neutral = 3.0
Disagree = 4.0
Strongly Disagree = 5.0

N = 4

Directions:	Please read each statement and circle the letters:
SA ...	if you Strongly Agree
A ...	if you Agree
N ...	for Neutral if you do not agree or disagree
D ...	if you Disagree
SD ...	if you Strongly Disagree

MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	
1.0	**0.0**	1. I enjoyed the "guest presentation" by _____. (name of guest presenter)
4.5	**0.6**	2. The students did not learn anything new from the "guest presenter."
2.3	**0.5**	3. The students are more motivated since the "guest presenter" visited class.
1.3	**0.5**	4. The "guest presenter" made the lesson more meaningful.
1.3	**0.5**	5. I would like to have a "guest presenter" in my other classes.
1.5	**.58**	6. The value of having a guest presenter outseighs the logistical efforts it demands.

APPENDIX A.9

School Effectiveness and Climate

Partnership for School Success Program (1991-92)

Please complete the following information. Individual responses will be kept confidential. Information will be reported in aggregate only.

Anwatin
N = 50

PART A.

Please complete the following information:

I. Your current position(s): **80 % teacher**
18 % resource
2% administrator

II. The primary funding source of your position:
44% special education
56% regular education

III. Number of years you have been a fulltime educator:
mean = 13 years, range = 1-27

VI. Number of years you have been at this school:
mean = 4 years, range = 1-12

IV. Ethnicity:
13% African American
87% European American

V. Gender:
79% Female
21% Male

Directions: Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following statements is currently a characteristic of your school.

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree = 3.0
Strongly Disagree = 4.0

		Mean	SD
1.	This school has a sense of purpose and clearly defined goals and expectations related to student achievement.	2.28	0.64
2.	School policy and procedures are congruent with adopted school goals.	2.37	0.64
3.	Teachers show enthusiasm for teaching.	1.84	0.50
4.	Students show enthusiasm for learning.	2.57	0.67
5.	School staff and students show respect for each other.	2.60	0.60
6.	The principal encourages progress toward high goals and expectations.	2.07	0.62
7.	The principal offers ongoing, constructive feedback to teaching staff.	2.47	0.67
8.	Staff at school-site create school improvement programs to meet the school's identified needs and concerns.	2.06	0.59
9.	District-level support is provided to schools to help them manage their school improvement efforts.	2.80	0.64
10.	Teachers plan and design instructional materials together.	1.97	0.50
11.	The staff development program is directed toward the school's goals and instructional program.	2.03	0.59
12.	Staff development programs are relevant to current classroom concerns.	2.20	0.66
13.	Textbooks, activities, and curriculum match desired student outcomes.	2.21	0.49
14.	A wide range of school involvement activities are available to parents.	2.48	0.61
15.	School rules are consistently applied by all teachers and staff.	3.20	0.70

modified from: Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program, Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, MN 55101, and E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects, The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402.

School Effectiveness and Climate

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree = 3.0
Strongly Disagree = 4.0

		Mean	SD
16.	Teachers handle inappropriate behavior in a way that maintains dignity of student and positive classroom environment.	2.18	0.47
17.	High expectations and goals are set for all students.	2.67	0.71
18.	Teachers emphasize creative thinking, reasoning, group decision making, persistence, curiosity, and ingenuity for all students.	2.27	0.56
19.	School organization, instructional strategies and group patterns are flexible and based upon the needs of the students.	2.40	0.66
20.	Teachers base instructional decisions upon accurate records which document student performance.	2.36	0.72
21.	Adequate provision is made for student practice.	2.04	0.56
22.	Teachers use oral, written, and other products to assess student progress.	1.94	0.71
23.	In this school even low achieving students are respected.	2.05	0.61
24.	Students can count on teachers to listen to their side of the story and to be fair.	1.90	0.53
25.	This school makes students enthusiastic about learning.	2.23	0.46
26.	Important decisions are made in this school by a governing council with representation from students, faculty, and administration.	2.52	0.82
27.	The school supports parent growth. Regular opportunities are provided for parents to be involved in learning activities and in examining new ideas.	2.35	0.72
28.	Careful effort is made, when new programs are introduced, to adapt them to the particular needs of this community and this school.	2.32	0.74
29.	Required textbooks and curriculum guides support rather than limit creative teaching and learning in our school.	2.12	0.56
30.	Teachers are actively learning, too.	1.78	0.67
31.	This school's program stimulates creative thought and expression.	2.00	0.64
32.	Each student's special abilities (intellectual, artistic, social, or manual) are challenged.	2.47	0.70
33.	Teachers use a wide range of teaching materials and media.	1.92	0.61
34.	Many opportunities are provided for learning in individual and small-group settings, as well as in classroom-sized groups.	1.95	0.56
35.	The school program extends to settings beyond the school building for most students.	2.59	0.67
36.	The school's program is appropriate for ethnic and minority groups.	2.20	0.73
37.	Students are given alternative ways of meeting curriculum requirements.	2.27	0.66
38.	Extracurricular activities appeal to each of the various subgroups of students.	2.29	0.82

modified from: Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program, Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, MN 55101; and E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects, The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402.

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree = 3.0
Strongly Disagree = 4.0

		Mean	SD
39.	The school's program encourages students to develop self-discipline and initiative.	2.44	0.64
40.	The needs of a few students for close supervision and high structure are met without making those students feel "put down."	2.20	0.44
41.	Rules are few and simple.	2.28	0.67
42.	Teachers are rewarded for exceptionally good teaching.	2.79	0.76
43.	This school has set some goals as a school for this year and I know about them.	2.16	0.66
44.	The goals of this school are used to provide direction for programs.	2.27	0.64
45.	In this school the principal tries to deal with conflict constructively; not just "keep the lid on."	2.35	0.77
46.	When one teaching strategy does not seem to be working for a particular student, the teacher tries another; does not blame the student for initial failure.	2.12	0.65
47.	The school systematically encourages students to help other students with their learning activities.	2.28	0.63
48.	Curriculum materials used in this school give appropriate emphasis and accurate facts regarding ethnic and minority groups, and sex roles.	2.17	0.65
49.	Teachers and students are able to get the instructional materials they need at the time they are needed.	2.46	0.64
50.	The support system of this school fosters creative and effective teaching/learning opportunities rather than hinders them.	2.20	0.61

modified from Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program, Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, MN 55101; and E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402.

School Effectiveness and Climate

Partnership for School Success Program (1991-92)

Please complete the following information. Individual responses will be kept confidential. Information will be reported in aggregate only.

Northeast
N = 63

PART A.

Please complete the following information:

I. Your current position(s): **76% teacher**
21% resource
3% administrator

II. The primary funding source of your position:
37% special education
63% regular education

III. Number of years you have been a fulltime educator:
mean = 13 years, range = 1-28

VI. Number of years you have been at this school:
mean = 4 years, range = 1-13

IV. Ethnicity:
5% African American
92% European American
3% Other

V. Gender:
64% Female
36% Male

Directions: Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following statements is currently a characteristic of your school.

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree =3.0
Strongly Disagree = 4.0

		Mean	SD
1.	This school has a sense of purpose and clearly defined goals and expectations related to student achievement.	1.78	0.63
2.	School policy and procedures are congruent with adopted school goals.	1.84	0.62
3.	Teachers show enthusiasm for teaching.	1.74	0.59
4.	Students show enthusiasm for learning.	2.40	0.50
5.	School staff and students show respect for each other.	2.36	0.56
6.	The principal encourages progress toward high goals and expectations.	1.57	0.56
7.	The principal offers ongoing, constructive feedback to teaching staff.	1.83	0.80
8.	Staff at school-site create school improvement programs to meet the school's identified needs and concerns.	1.90	0.63
9.	District-level support is provided to schools to help them manage their school improvement efforts.	2.62	0.77
10.	Teachers plan and design instructional materials together.	2.06	0.55
11.	The staff development program is directed toward the school's goals and instructional program.	1.79	0.58
12.	Staff development programs are relevant to current classroom concerns.	1.98	0.62
13.	Textbooks, activities, and curriculum match desired student outcomes.	2.25	0.55
14.	A wide range of school involvement activities are available to parents.	2.52	0.72
15.	School rules are consistently applied by all teachers and staff.	2.58	0.85

modified from: Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program, Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, MN 55101; and E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402.

School Effectiveness and Climate

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree =3.0
Strongly Disagree = 4.0

		Mean	SD
16.	Teachers handle inappropriate behavior in a way that maintains dignity of student and positive classroom environment.	2.05	0.46
17.	High expectations and goals are set for all students.	2.08	0.70
18.	Teachers emphasize creative thinking, reasoning, group decision making, persistence, curiosity, and ingenuity for all students.	2.10	0.59
19.	School organization, instructional strategies and group patterns are flexible and based upon the needs of the students.	2.13	0.70
20.	Teachers base instructional decisions upon accurate records which document student performance.	2.17	0.57
21.	Adequate provision is made for student practice.	2.01	0.51
22.	Teachers use oral, written, and other products to assess student progress.	1.95	0.49
23.	In this school even low achieving students are respected.	1.77	0.60
24.	Students can count on teachers to listen to their side of the story and to be fair.	1.86	0.49
25.	This school makes students enthusiastic about learning.	2.17	0.55
26.	Important decisions are made in this school by a governing council with representation from students, faculty, and administration.	2.35	0.79
27.	The school supports parent growth. Regular opportunities are provided for parents to be involved in learning activities and in examining new ideas.	2.36	0.67
28.	Careful effort is made, when new programs are introduced, to adapt them to the particular needs of this community and this school.	2.22	0.63
29.	Required textbooks and curriculum guides support rather than limit creative teaching and learning in our school.	2.23	0.70
30.	Teachers are actively learning, too.	1.71	0.54
31.	This school's program stimulates creative thought and expression.	1.93	0.69
32.	Each student's special abilities (intellectual, artistic, social, or manual) are challenged.	2.25	0.58
33.	Teachers use a wide range of teaching materials and media.	1.87	0.53
34.	Many opportunities are provided for learning in individual and small-group settings, as well as in classroom-sized groups.	2.02	0.67
35.	The school program extends to settings beyond the school building for most students.	2.60	0.80
36.	The school's program is appropriate for ethnic and minority groups.	2.07	0.69
37.	Students are given alternative ways of meeting curriculum requirements.	2.38	0.58
38.	Extracurricular activities appeal to each of the various subgroups of students.	2.71	0.73

modified from: Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program, Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, MN 55101; and E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402.

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree =3.0
Strongly Disagree = 4.0

		Mean	SD
39.	The school's program encourages students to develop self-discipline and initiative.	2.15	0.60
40.	The needs of a few students for close supervision and high structure are met without making those students feel "put down."	2.04	0.55
41.	Rules are few and simple.	2.13	0.64
42.	Teachers are rewarded for exceptionally good teaching.	2.64	0.68
43.	This school has set some goals as a school for this year and I know about them.	2.06	0.68
44.	The goals of this school are used to provide direction for programs.	1.98	0.63
45.	In this school the principal tries to deal with conflict constructively; not just "keep the lid on."	1.56	0.56
46.	When one teaching strategy does not seem to be working for a particular student, the teacher tries another; does not blame the student for initial failure.	2.01	0.58
47.	The school systematically encourages students to help other students with their learning activities.	2.11	0.60
48.	Curriculum materials used in this school give appropriate emphasis and accurate facts regarding ethnic and minority groups, and sex roles.	2.15	0.56
49.	Teachers and students are able to get the instructional materials they need at the time they are needed.	2.53	0.79
50.	The support system of this school fosters creative and effective teaching/ learning opportunities rather than hinders them.	2.03	0.47

modified from: Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program, Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, MN 55101; and E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects, The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402.

Student's Perception of Support for Learning

League of Schools Reaching Out Study -
Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

Name of School: Anwatin
Grade Level: 6 - 7 - 8
Total Respondents: 117
Date: 05 - 92

Directions: Please circle the answer that best describes how you feel.

1. How often does someone in your family:

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
• Make sure you do your homework	1.72	1.09
• Know how you are doing in school	1.70	0.88
• Go to school programs for parents (open houses, dinners, etc.)	2.80	1.23
• Help you with school work	2.08	0.98
• Go to conferences with your teachers/counselors	2.33	1.18
• Ask you what you learned in school	2.13	1.25

Always = 1.0
Often = 2.0
Sometimes = 3.0
Rarely = 4.0
Never = 5.0

2. How many of your teachers fit the following descriptions

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
• Teachers who are interested in your life	3.35	1.16
• Teachers who spend extra time with you	3.40	1.15
• Teachers who involve you in class	2.15	1.09
• Teachers who help you learn	1.45	0.65
• Teachers who are interested in your classwork	1.86	1.00
• Teachers who answer your questions	1.95	0.88
• Teachers who work with your parents	3.54	1.34
• Teachers who appreciate student effort	1.80	1.04

Always = 1.0
Often = 2.0
Sometimes = 3.0
Rarely = 4.0
Never = 5.0

3. Name 2 things your teachers do that have helped you do well in school.

SEE ATTACHED

4. Name 2 things your parents or guardians do that have helped you do well in school.

SEE ATTACHED

5. How sure are you that you will graduate from high school?

		MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1	I am **very sure** I **will** graduate	1.30	0.46
2	I **probably will** graduate		
3	I **probably won't** graduate		
4	I am **very sure** I **won't** graduate		

Instruments from Partnership for School Success Program: S. Christenson, M. Thurlow & M. Sinclair, University of Minnesota. Please return all completed surveys to: Mary Sinclair, University of Minnesota, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, 6 Pattee Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

CODE SHEET
"Things teachers & parents do that have a
positive influence on a youth's performance in school"

Question 3:

Frequency	**Things teachers do ...**
6	Do not do anything to help.
16	Praise and encourage youth.
18	Provide instructional support to youth.
65	*Provide instructional support* - help youth understand work.
15	*Provide instructional support* - teach youth things, instruction.
39	*Provide instructional support* - explain things clearly.
23	*Provide instructional support* - assigning and monitoring feedback regarding assignments.
4	Involve and inform parents.
2	Offer consistency and structure regarding expectaions, respect, and discipline. and help youth understand moral and ethical responsibilities.
2	Hold high expectaions for youth.
0	Model behavior and attitudes expected of youth.
17	Be respectful and caring of youth as individuals.
0	Do more than teach.
0	Be flexible and humorous.
0	Help youth develop problem solving skills.

Question 4:

Frequency	**Things parents do ...**
5	Do not do anything to help.
6	Praise, encourage, and reward youth for being successful in school.
0	Monitor and support youth's homework/progress.
100	*Monitor and support homework* - help with homework, study with students.
41	*Monitor and support homework* - monitor homework and study time.
8	Keep in communication with school.
2	Visit and spend time at school.
1	Support teacher behavioral/discipline plans.
0	Be positive about teacher, both verbally and in action.
21	Support importance of learning and schooling.
16	Be caring and loving of youth.
0	Model behavior and attitudes expected of youth.
9	Hold high expectations for youth.
0	Be accountable.
0	Work as partner with school to solve any problems concerning youth.
5	Provide basic needs for youth.
3	Offer consistency and structure regarding expectations, respect, and discipline. And help youth understand moral and ethical responsibilities.

Student's Perception of Support for Learning

League of Schools Reaching Out Study -
Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

Name of School: Northeast
Grade Level: 6 - 7 - 8
Total Respondents: 143
Date: 05 - 92

Directions: Please circle the answer that best describes how you feel.

1 How often does someone in your family:	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
• Make sure you do your homework	1.99	1.05
• Know how you are doing in school	1.69	0.88
• Go to school programs for parents (open houses, dinners, etc.)	2.71	1.23
• Help you with school work	2.13	1.00
• Go to conferences with your teachers/counselors	2.11	1.22
• Ask you what you learned in school	2.34	1.21

Always = 1.0
Often = 2.0
Sometimes = 3.0
Rarely = 4.0
Never = 5.0

2 How many of your teachers fit the following descriptions	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
• Teachers who are interested in your life	3.20	1.11
• Teachers who spend extra time with you	3.45	1.15
• Teachers who involve you in class	2.31	1.18
• Teachers who help you learn	1.66	0.95
• Teachers who are interested in your classwork	1.78	1.01
• Teachers who answer your questions	2.04	1.08
• Teachers who work with your parents	3.41	1.47
• Teachers who appreciate student effort	1.54	0.85

Always = 1.0
Often = 2.0
Sometimes = 3.0
Rarely = 4.0
Never = 5.0

3 Name 2 things your teachers do that have helped you do well in school.

SEE ATTACHED

4 Name 2 things your parents or guardians do that have helped you do well in school.

SEE ATTACHED

5 How sure are you that you will graduate from high school?	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1 I am **very sure** I **will** graduate	1.34	0.54
2 I **probably will** graduate		
3 I **probably won't** graduate		
4 I am **very sure** I **won't** graduate		

Instruments from Partnership for School Success Program: S. Christenson, M. Thurlow & M. Sinclair, University of Minnesota. Please return all completed surveys to: Mary Sinclair, University of Minnesota, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, 6 Pattee Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

CODE SHEET
"Things teachers & parents do that have a positive influence on a youth's performance in school"

Question 3:

Frequency	Things teachers do ...
12	Do not do anything to help.
26	Praise and encourage youth.
0	Provide instructional support to youth.
92	*Provide instructional support* - help youth understand work.
28	*Provide instructional support* - teach youth things, instruction.
23	*Provide instructional support* - explain things clearly.
16	*Provide instructional support* - assigning and monitoring feedback regarding assignments.
0	Involve and inform parents.
12	Offer consistency and structure regarding expectaions, respect, and discipline, and help youth understand moral and ethical responsibilities.
0	Hold high expectaions for youth.
0	Model behavior and attitudes expected of youth.
27	Be respectful and caring of youth as individuals.
0	Do more than teach.
0	Be flexible and humorous.
0	Help youth develop problem solving skills.

Question 4:

Frequency	Things parents do ...
4	Do not do anything to help.
20	Praise, encourage, and reward youth for being successful in school.
0	Monitor and support youth's homework/progress.
86	*Monitor and support homework* - help with homework, study with students.
46	*Monitor and support homework* - monitor homework and study time.
10	Keep in communication with school.
2	Visit and spend time at school.
7	Support teacher behavioral/discipline plans.
0	Be positive about teacher, both verbally and in action.
29	Support importance of learning and schooling.
11	Be caring and loving of youth.
0	Model behavior and attitudes expected of youth.
6	Hold high expectations for youth.
0	Be accountable.
0	Work as partner with school to solve any problems concerning youth.
9	Provide basic needs for youth.
11	Offer consistency and structure regarding expectations, respect, and discipline, And help youth understand moral and ethical responsibilities.

Home-School Partnership Survey-F

N = 58

League of Schools Reaching Out Study -
Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

Teacher Form

Please complete the following information. Individual responses will be kept confidential. Information will be reported in aggregate only.

1. Teacher Name: not applicable
2. School: **Anwatin & Northeast**
3. Your current position(s): **teacher = 97%; resource staff = 2%; administrator = 1%**
   If you are a teacher, what grade level(s): 6 - 7 - 8
4. The primary funding source of your position:
   10% special education
   90% regular education
5. Number of years you have been a fulltime educator:
   mean: 8.9 yrs.
   range: 1-22 yrs.
6. Number of years you have been at this school:
   mean: 4.0 yrs.
   range: 1-10 yrs.
7. How do you identify yourself ethnically or racially? **7% African American**
   93% European American
8. Gender: **89%** Female **11 %** Male

Directions: Please respond to the following statements by indicating whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

1.0 = Strongly Agree
2.0 = Agree
3.0 = Disagree
4.0 = Strongly Disagree

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1. I honestly state concerns about this student's performance to his or her parents/guardians.	1.66	.76
2. The parents/guardians of this student and I often have different educational goals.	3.23	.49
3. The parents/guardians of this student and I welcome ideas and suggestions from each other about ways to improve this student's school performance.	1.92	.80
4. It is difficult to find opportunities for me and the parents/guardians to communicate about this student.	2.48	.99
5. The parents/guardians of this student do a good job of helping their child with learning activities at home.	2.10	.75
6. There are opportunities for me and the parents/guardians to make decisions together about this student's education.	2.30	.85
7. I am not sure the parents/guardians of this student have good parenting skills and knowledge.	2.37	.89
8 The parents/guardians of this student are frequently involved in school activities, such as open house or talent night.	2.64	.90

Instruments from Partnership for School Success Program: S. Christenson, S.F. Lam & M. Sinclair, University of Minnesota. Please return completed surveys to Mary Sinclair, University of Minnesota, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, 6 Pattee Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Home-School Partnership Survey-F

League of Schools Reaching Out Study -
Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

1.0 = Strongly Agree
2.0 = Agree
3.0 = Disagree
4.0 = Strongly Disagree

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
9. The parents/guardians of this student need to know or learn specific ways to help their child at home.	2.37	.90
10. I know what the parents/guardians of this student want me to do to help this student learn.	2.36	.90
11. The parents/guardians of this student make sure their child has good nutrition, proper clothing, and enough sleep.	1.84	.64
12. I trust the parents/guardians of this student to provide the best learning environment for their child.	2.04	.80
13. I doubt if the parents/guardians of this student are supportive of me in problems concerning their child.	3.09	.74
14. When this student is having problems in school, his or her parents/guardians		
◆ and I determine one goal we both want to work toward.	2.39	.84
◆ and I develop a plan for changing the problems.	2.24	.77
◆ listen to me and try to understand my perception.	2.24	.82
15. I am confident that the parents/guardians of this student		
◆ are doing a good job in helping their child with academic subjects at home	2.07	.73
◆ respect me as a competent teacher	1.81	.44
◆ care about their child	1.60	.49
◆ are doing a good job in helping their child resolve conflicts with peers	1.96	.64
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging their child's sense of self-esteem	1.90	.61
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging their child to have positive attitude toward learning	1.96	.69
◆ are doing a good job in participating in their child's education	1.96	.70
◆ are doing a good job in disciplining their child	1.87	.61
◆ are teaching their child to be a good citizen	1.82	.57
◆ are doing a good job in providing their child with relevant learning experiences	1.93	.64

1.0 = Frequently
2.0 = Sometimes
3.0 = Rarely
4.0 = Never

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
16. In this school year how often have you:		
◆ informed the parents/guardians of this student (by phone or note) about the progress of their child?	2.23	.92
◆ contacted them regarding a problem involving their child?	3.07	1.01
◆ contacted them to tell them something positive about their child?	3.00	.92
17. In this school year how often have the parents/guardians of this student:		
◆ contacted you to check on their child's progress?	3.25	.95
◆ contacted you regarding a problems involving their child?	3.40	.89
◆ contacted you for positive reasons?	3.49	.83

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1.0 =Very Important
2.0 =Important
3.0 =Less Important
4.0 = Least Important

18. When trying to resolve a school concern for this student, how important it is for his or her parent to share the following information with you?	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
◆ their expectations for their child	1.37	.58
◆ their stress and concerns	1.53	.62
◆ their discipline approach	1.69	.70
◆ their attitude toward learning	1.53	.59
◆ their child's home life (e.g. sibling or parent-child relationship)	1.57	.69

1.0 = Very Comfortable
2.0 = Comfortable
3.0 = Uncomfortable
4.0 = Very Uncomfortable

19. When trying to resolve a school concern for this student, how comfortable are you discussing the following with his or her parents?	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
◆ your expectations for this student	1.15	.36
◆ your stress and concerns	1.32	.56
◆ school rules and discipline policies	1.27	.48
◆ curriculum and teaching activities	1.26	.44
◆ school performance and adjustment of this child	1.27	.45

20. In your experience, name two things you do that have had a positive influence on this student's performance in school.

_____

_____

21. In your experience, name two things the parents/guardians of this student do that have had a positive influence on this student's performance in school.

_____

_____

22. Are the parents/guardians on the action research team representative of all your students' parent/guardians? (you only need to respond to this question on one of the four surveys.)
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No, explain _____

Home-School Partnership Survey
League of Schools Reaching Out Study -
Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

Parent Form

School: **Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools**
Grades: 6-7-8
Number of Respondents: 39

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree = 3.0
Strongly Disagree =4.0

	Mean	SD
1. I honestly state concerns about my child's performance to my child's teacher(s).	1.46	0.60
2. My child's teacher(s) and I have different educational goals for my child.	2.74	0.89
3. My child's teacher(s) and I welcome ideas and suggestions from each other about ways to improve my child's school performance.	1.51	0.68
4. It is difficult to find opportunities for me and my child's teacher(s) to communicate about my child.	2.64	0.87
5. I do a good job of helping my child with learning activities at home.	1.64	0.63
6. There are opportunities for me and my child's teacher(s) to make decisions together about my child's education.	1.86	0.72
7. I am not sure the my child's teacher(s) have the skills and knowledge to teach my child.	3.03	0.87
8 I am frequently involved in school activities, such as open house or talent night.	2.37	0.79
9. I need to know or learn specific ways to help my child at home.	1.69	0.73
10. I know what my child's teacher(s) want me to do to help my child learn.	2.33	0.90
11. I make sure my child has good nutrition, proper clothing, and enough sleep.	1.36	0.54
12. I trust my child's teacher(s) to provide the best learning environment for my child.	1.54	0.60
13. I question whether my child's teacher(s) are supportive of me and my child.	2.41	0.88

Instruments from Partnership for School Success Program: S. Christenson, S.F. Lam & M. Sinclair, University of Minnesota. Please send completed surveys to Mary Sinclair, University of Minnesota, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, 6 Pattee Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree = 3.0
Strongly Disagree =4.0

	Mean	SD
14. When my child is having problems in school, my child's teacher(s):		
◆ and I determine one goal we both want to work toward.	2.04	0.78
◆ and I develop a plan for changing the problems.	2.10	0.77
◆ listen to me and try to understand my needs.	2.19	0.80
15. I am confident that the teachers of my child:		
◆ are doing a good job in teaching my child academic skills	1.68	0.74
◆ respect me as a competent parent/guardian	1.81	0.62
◆ care about my child	1.76	0.59
◆ are doing a good job in helping my child resolve conflicts with peers	199	0.69
◆ are doing a good job keeping me well informed of my child's progress	2.05	0.847
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging my child's sense of self-esteem	1.99	0.76
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging my child to have a positive attitude toward learning	1.93	0.55
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging my participation in my child's education	1.91	0.57
◆ are doing a good job in disciplining my child	2.12	0.74
◆ are teaching my child to be a good citizen	1.80	0.43
◆ are doing a good job in providing my child with relevant learning experience	1.85	0.61

Complete the following questions by indicating how often they occur.

Frequently = 1.0
Sometimes = 2.0
Rarely = 3.0
Never = 4.0

16. During this school year, how often has someone from school:		
◆ informed you (by phone or note) about the progress of your child?	1.92	0.94
◆ contacted you regarding a problem involving your child?	2.24	1.00
◆ contacted you to tell you something positive about your child?	2.71	1.16
17. During this school year, how often have you:		
◆ contacted your child's teacher to check on your child's progress?	2.18	1.14
◆ contacted your child's teacher for positive reasons?	2.84	1.08
◆ contacted your child's teacher regarding a problem involving your child?	2.21	0.99

More than 7 = 1.0
3-6 times = 2.0
1-2 times = 3.0
Never = 4.0

18. In a typical week, how many times do you:		
◆ ask your child about school?	1.54	0.55
◆ help your child with homework?	2.31	0.81
19. How many times have you done the following this school year:		
◆ attended a parent meeting (e.g. PTO, parent support group for school)	3.03	1.18
◆ attended a parent-teacher conference	3.04	0.97
◆ attended school activities (e.g. open house)	3.19	0.91
◆ others _____	2.88	1.26

Instruments from Partnership for School Success Program: S. Christenson, S.F. Lam & M. Sinclair, University of Minnesota. Please send completed surveys to Mary Sinclair, University of Minnesota, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, 6 Pattee Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Very Comfortable = 1.0
Comfortable = 2.0
Uncomfortable = 3.0
Very Uncomfortable = 4.0

	Mean	SD
20. When trying to resolve a school concern for your child, how comfortable are you discussing the following with your child's teacher(s)?		
◆ your expectations for your child	1.44	0.55
◆ your stress and concerns	1.59	0.55
◆ your discipline approach	1.41	0.50
◆ your attitude toward learning	1.36	0.49
◆ your child's home life (e.g. sibling or parent-child relationship)	1.64	0.63

Very Important = 1.0
Important = 2.0
Less Important = 3.0
Least Important =4.0

21. When trying to resolve a school concern for your child, how important is it for your child's teacher(s) to share the following information with you?		
◆ their expectations for your child	1.13	0.43
◆ their stress and concern	1.23	0.43
◆ school rules and discipline policies	1.26	0.50
◆ curriculum and teaching activities	1.28	0.46
◆ school performance and adjustment of your child	1.21	0.41

Yes = 1.0 No = 2.0

22. Children do not always perform in school at the level desired by parents and educators. Has your child's school performance ever been a source of stress for you and your family?	1.36	0.49

23. In your experience, name two things the teachers of your child do that have had a positive influence on your child's performance in school.

_____

_____

24. In your experience, name two things you do that have had a positive influence on your child's performance in school.

_____

_____

25. How do you supervise and monitor your child's use of free time (i.e., out of school time)?

_____

_____

Almost Always = 1.0
Often = 2.0
Sometimes = 3.0
Almost Never = 4.0

26. How often do the following things keep you from being involved at school?	Mean	SD
• transportation to the school	2.50	1.31
• work	2.64	1.14
• time schedule	2.82	1.02
• child care	3.41	1.02
• feel uncomfortable at school	3.87	0.34
• negative experiences with this or another school in the past	3.85	0.59
• not interested	3.79	0.62
• no one asked me	3.42	0.92
• other reasons (specify) _____	3.29	1.45

27. How often do the following things keep you from being involved with your child's schoolwork at home?		
• house chores	3.41	0.94
• younger children	3.26	0.85
• don't know how	3.31	0.76
• work	3.13	1.06
• child's resistance	3.33	0.93
• hardship the family is facing	3.53	0.73
• too many other things to do	3.49	0.76
• somebody else helps her/him	2.92	1.12

28. Based on your experience, is this school a place where you can comfortably work through concerns or problems regarding your child?	1.70	0.81

29. Do you feel welcome at school?	1.49	0.76

Strongly Agree = 1.0
Agree = 2.0
Disagree = 3.0
Strongly Disagree = 4.0

30. Overall, the school is doing a good job of educating all of the children?	1.68	0.51

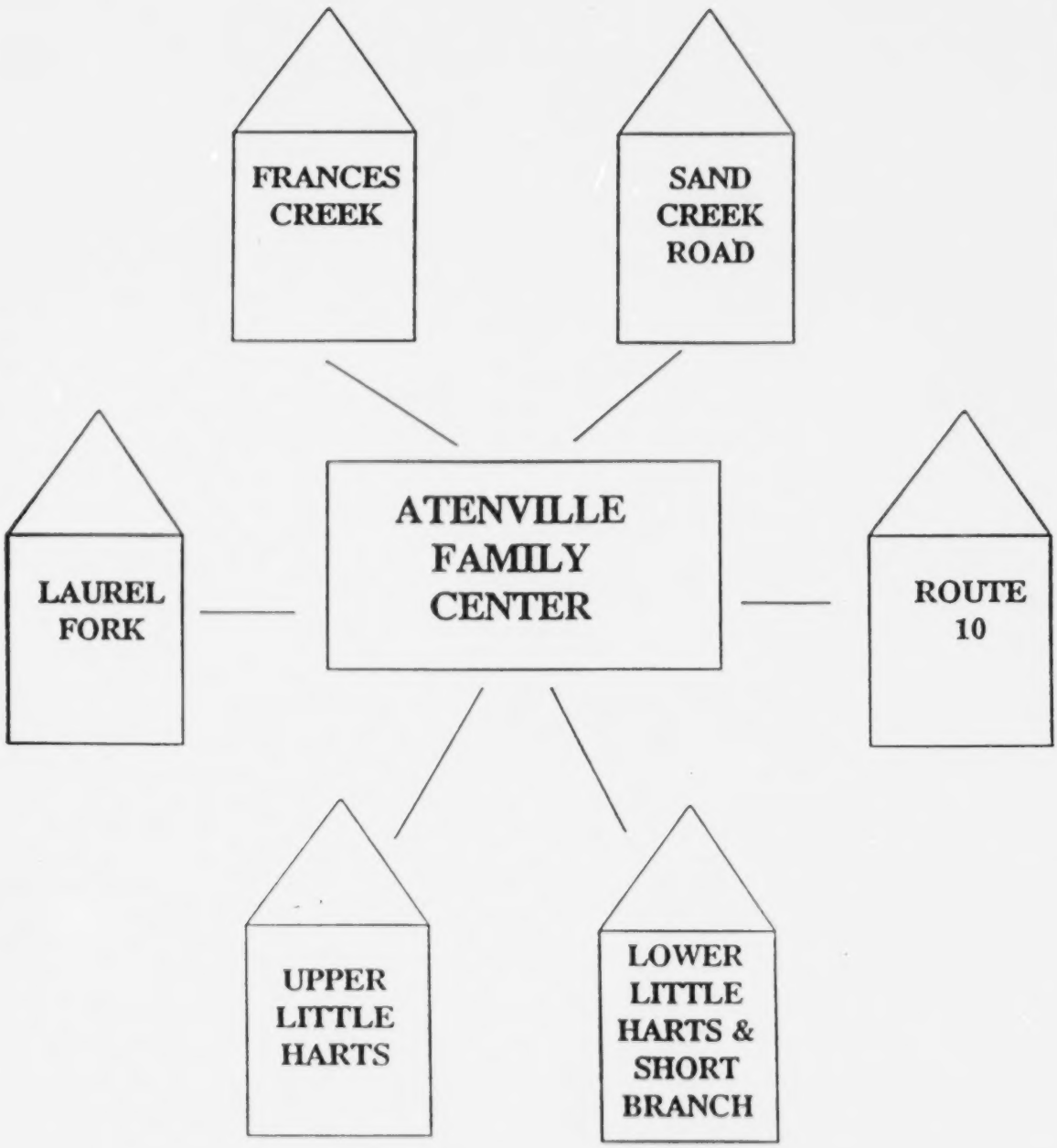
APPENDIX B.1

Atenville Parent Center Assessment

Assessment Components	1990-91	1991-92
· Number of Parent Volunteers		
· PTA Membership		
· Average PTA Membership Attendance		
· Average Attendance at Honors Assembly		
· Average Attendance at Parenting Workshops		

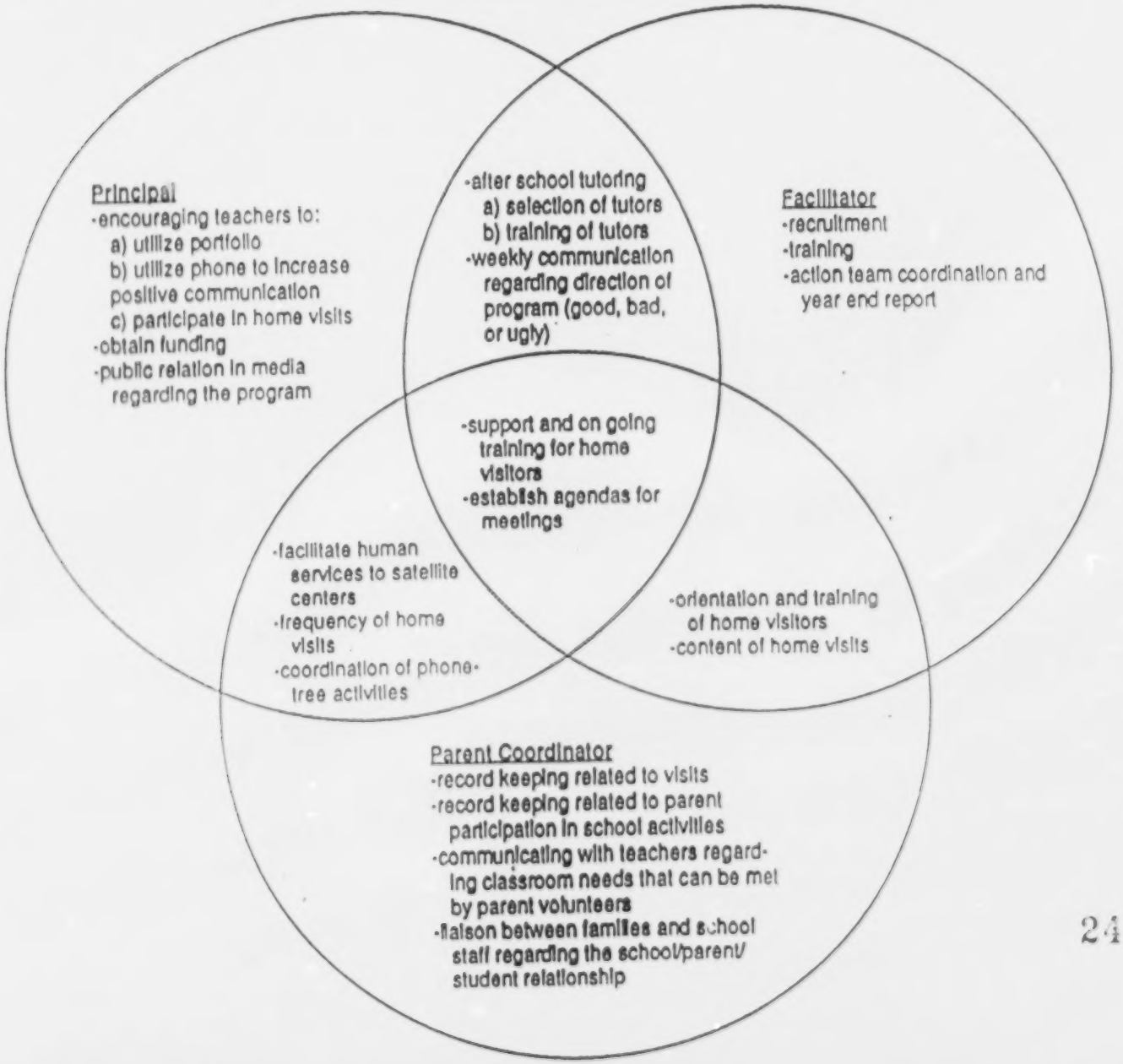
Assessment Components	1990-91	1991-92
· Attendance at Open House		
· Average Daily Attendance		
· Number of Discipline Referrals		
· Number of Students Scoring Above 50 Percentile		
· Percent of Promotions		

Phone Tree and Satellite Centers



Atenville Elementary's Seven Attendance Areas

The Interrelationship of Roles/Responsibilities
For the Atenville Elementary School Program


Principal
-encouraging teachers to:
a) utilize portfolio
b) utilize phone to increase positive communication
c) participate in home visits
-obtain funding
-public relation in media regarding the program
-after school tutoring
a) selection of tutors
b) training of tutors
-weekly communication regarding direction of program (good, bad, or ugly)
Facilitator
-recruitment
-training
-action team coordination and year end report
-support and on going training for home visitors
-establish agendas for meetings
-facilitate human services to satellite centers
-frequency of home visits
-coordination of phone-tree activities
-orientation and training of home visitors
-content of home visits
Parent Coordinator
-record keeping related to visits
-record keeping related to parent participation in school activities
-communicating with teachers regarding classroom needs that can be met by parent volunteers
-liaison between families and school staff regarding the school/parent/student relationship

Atenville Elementary School
"Parents as Educational Partners"
Goals and Objectives

To improve parent and school communication.

To increase parent attendance at meetings and activities.

To increase quality and quantity of parent involvement at home and at school.

To increase the level of positive school and community relationships.

To increase the students' level of self esteem.

To increase average daily attendance.

To increase the percentage of students scoring above the 50th percentile on the CTBS.

To decrease number of discipline referrals.

To increase percentage of promotions.

To decrease parent and student anxiety about school and school activities.

To improve parenting skills.

APPENDIX B.2

HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP SURVEY
League of Schools Reaching Out Study -
Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

TEACHER FORM

Please complete the following information. Individual responses will be kept confidential. Information will be reported in aggregate only.

1. Respondent Code:_____
2. Name of School:_____
3. Your current position(s):_____
   (e.g. teacher, resource staff, administrator)
   If you are a teacher, what grade level(s):_____
4. The primary funding source of your position:
   ___ special education ____ chapter 1
   ___ regular education ___ other_____
5. Number of years you have been a full-time educator:_____years
6. Number of years you have been at this school: _____ years
7. How do you identify yourself ethnically or racially?_____
8. Ethnic/Racial Code (completed by facilitator)___
9. Gender: ___ Female ___Male

Answer these questions in general reference to the group of students which you are working with this year.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I honestly state concerns about my students' performance to their parents/guardians.	1	2	3	4
2. The parents/guardians of my students and I often have different educational goals.	1	2	3	4
3. The parents/guardians of my students and I welcome ideas and suggestions from each other about ways to improve their child's school performance.	1	2	3	4
4. It is difficult to find opportunities for me and the parents/ guardians to communicate.	1	2	3	4
5. The parents/guardians of my students do a good job of helping their children with learning activities at home.	1	2	3	4
6. There are opportunities for me and the parents/guardians to make decisions together about my students' education.	1	2	3	4
7. I am not sure the parents/guardians of my students have good parenting skills and knowledge.	1	2	3	4
8. The parents/guardians of my students are frequently involved in school activities, such as open house or talent night.	1	2	3	4
9. The parents/guardians of my students need to know or learn specific ways to help their child at home.	1	2	3	4

Answer these questions in general reference to the group of students which you are working with this year.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. I know what the parents/guardians of my students want me to do to help their child learn.	1	2	3	4
11. The parent/guardians of my students make sure their child has good nutrition, proper clothing, and enough sleep.	1	2	3	4
12. I trust the parents/guardians of my students to provide the best learning environment for their child.	1	2	3	4
13. I doubt if the parents/guardians of my students are supportive of me in problems concerning their child.	1	2	3	4
14. When my students are having problems in school, their parents/guardians:				
- and I determine one goal we both want to work toward.	1	2	3	4
- and I develop a plan for changing the problems.	1	2	3	4
- listen to me and try to understand my perception.	1	2	3	4
15. I am confident that the parents/guardians of my students:				
- are doing a good job in helping their child with academic subjects at home	1	2	3	4
- respect me as a competent teacher	1	2	3	4
- care about their child	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in helping their child resolve conflicts with peers	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in encouraging their child's sense of self esteem	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in encouraging their child to have positive attitude toward learning	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in participating in their child's education	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in disciplining their child	1	2	3	4
- are teaching their child to be a good citizen	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in providing their child with relevant learning experiences	1	2	3	4
	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
16. In this school year how often have you				
- informed the parents/guardians of your students (by phone or note) about the progress of their child?	1	2	3	4
- contacted them regarding a problem involving their child?	1	2	3	4
- contacted them to tell them something positive about their child?	1	2	3	4
17. In this school year, how often have the parents/guardians of your students				
- contacted you to check on their child's progress?	1	2	3	4
- contacted you regarding problems involving their child?	1	2	3	4
- contacted you for positive reasons?	1	2	3	4

Answer these questions in general reference to the group of students which you are working with this year.	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Least Important
18. When trying to resolve a school concern for your students, how important is it for their parents to share the following information with you?				
- their expectations for their child	1	2	3	4
- their stress and concerns	1	2	3	4
- their discipline approach	1	2	3	4
- their attitude toward learning	1	2	3	4
- their child's home life (e.g. sibling or parent-child relationship)	1	2	3	4
	Very Comfort-able	**Comfort-able**	**Uncomfort-able**	**Very Uncomfort able**
19. When trying to resolve a school concern for your students, how comfortable are you discussing the following with their parents?				
- your expectations for their child	1	2	3	4
- your stress and concerns	1	2	3	4
- school rules and discipline policies	1	2	3	4
- curriculum and teaching activities	1	2	3	4
- school performance and adjustment of their child	1	2	3	4

20. In your experience, name two things you do that have had a positive influence on your students' performance in school.

21. In your experience, name two things the parents/guardians of your students do that have had a positive influence on their child's performance in school.

APPENDIX B.3

HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP SURVEY
PARENT FORM

1. Respondent Code:_____

2. Name of School:_____

3. Relationship to child:
   _____Mother _____Father
   _____Aunt _____Uncle
   _____Grandmother _____Other_____

4. How many of your children are enrolled in this school?_____

5. What grade levels are your children enrolled in this school?_____

6. Gender (of person completing survey)
   _____Female _____Male

7. How do you identify yourself ethnically or racially?_____

8. Ethnic/Racial Code (completed by facilitator)_____

9. What is the last grade in school you finished?

   _____No formal school
   _____Grade 4
   _____Grade 8
   _____High School
   _____Some College
   _____College

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. I state concerns about my child's performance to school personnel.	1	2	3	4
2. School personnel and I have the same educational goals for my child.	1	2	3	4
3. School personnel and I welcome ideas and suggestions from each other about ways to improve my child's school performance.	1	2	3	4
4. I help my child with learning activities at home. How?_____ _____	1	2	3	4
5. I need to know or learn specific ways to help my child at home. How?_____ _____	1	2	3	4
6. It is difficult to find opportunities for me and school personnel to communicate about my child.	1	2	3	4

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
7. I am confident that the teachers of my child:				
- are doing a good job teaching my child academic skills	1	2	3	4
- respect me as a competent parent/guardian	1	2	3	4
- care about my child	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in helping my child resolve conflicts with peers	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job keeping me well informed of my child's progress	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in encouraging my child's sense of self-esteem	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in encouraging my child to have a positive attitude toward learning	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in encouraging my participation in my child's education	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in disciplining my child	1	2	3	4
- are teaching my child to be a good citizen	1	2	3	4
- are doing a good job in providing my child with learning experience that they can use in their life	1	2	3	4
	+7	**3-6**	**1-2**	**Never**
8. During this school year, how often has someone from school:				
- informed you (by phone or note) about the progress of your child?	1	2	3	4
- contacted you regarding an academic or discipline problem involving your child?	1	2	3	4
- contacted you to tell you something positive about your child?	1	2	3	4
9. During this school year, how often have you:				
- contacted your child's teacher to check on your child's progress?	1	2	3	4
- contacted your child's teacher for positive reasons?	1	2	3	4
- contacted school personnel about academic or discipline problems involving your child?	1	2	3	4
10. In a typical week, how many times do you:				
- ask your child about school?	1	2	3	4
- help your child with homework?	1	2	3	4
11. How many times have you done the following this school year:				
- attended a parent meeting (PTA)?	1	2	3	4
- attended a parent-teacher conference?	1	2	3	4
- attended school activities (open house)?	1	2	3	4
- others_____	1	2	3	4

12. Do you think that the following information is important for school personnel to share with you:
    a. school rules/discipline policies _____yes _____no
    b. curriculum and teaching activities/techniques _____yes _____no

13. Children do not always perform in school at the level desired by parents and educators. Has your child's school performance ever been of stress for you/your family? _____yes _____no

14. In your experience, name two things the teachers of your child do that have had a positive influence on your child's performance in school.

    _____

    _____

15. In your experience, name two things you do that have had a positive influence on your child's performance in school.

    _____

    _____

16. How do you supervise and monitor your child when he/she is out of school?

    _____

    _____

17. Do the following things keep you from being involved at school?

    _____transportation to the school
    _____work
    _____time schedule
    _____child care
    _____feel uncomfortable at school
    _____negative experiences with this or another school in the past
    _____not interested
    _____no one asked me
    _____other reasons (specify)_____
    If you checked any of the above, why?_____

18. Do the following things keep you from being involved with your child's school work at home?

    _____house chores
    _____younger children
    _____don't know how
    _____work
    _____child's resistance
    _____hardship the family is facing
    _____too many other things to do
    _____somebody else helps her/him
    If you checked any of the above, why?_____

    _____

19. Based on your experience, is this school a place where you can comfortably work through concerns or problems regarding your child? _____yes _____no

20. Do you feel welcome at school? _____yes _____no
Reasons if yes or no: _____

21. Overall the school is doing a good job of educating all of the children? _____yes _____no
If no, why? _____

APPENDIX C.1

Child's Name Hlisa

Activity #3:

1. Show your baby the zipper bag, soap dish, and velcro bag. Encourage your baby to open each and explore it's contents. Help your baby if you see him having difficulty.

2. Use the words open and close, in and out as your baby is playing. Tell your baby to put the cards in the box, then take them out.

3. Name the different objects in the bags and soap dish. Imitate your baby's actions and sounds as he plays.

Parent response: How did this work for you?

it worked out fine to

What did baby like to do?

She liked to her purse she like to take things in and out and play with the purse

How did baby feel?

She felt happy.

Read a Book Together

1. Have the baby sit in your lap or next to you.
2. Give your baby the book and watch what he or she does with it.
3. Point to the different pictures and name them.
4. You don't need to read every word.
5. If baby points to something, follow baby's lead and talk about what your baby sees.
6. Don't worry if your baby can't sit with you for the entire book. It's okay to spend only a few minutes if that's what baby wants to do.

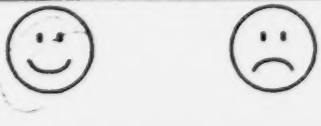
Parent response: How did this work for you?

OK. He knows to READ (I think). But he doesn't go through the "whole" BOOK by himself... It's like he gets BORED. But he'll sit for the "whole" book if I READ to him or someone else.

What did baby like to do?

point to pictures and what for me to say who or what it is

How did baby feel?



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Child's Name Katie.

Activity #2

1. Describe what your baby is doing with each toy.

   For example: "You are shaking the rattle." or "You are flying the airplane."

2. Next you imitate what baby is doing. Describe what you are doing with the toy.

   Example: "I am shaking the rattle."

3. Praise the baby when he uses the toy.

   Example: Clapping and saying "Good for you!"

Parent response: How did this work for you?

Katie has a hard time squeezing the ball, She likes to twirl the mirror on the rattle. She likes to try to grab the ball on the apple core but can't make it go around, She imitated turning the pages in the book pointing at each object making baby talk. The talking toy was become more interesting than a few weeks ago. She likes to grab the rings

How did baby feel?

Child's Name Unclea

Activity #1:

1. Let her set up a "tea party" with the dishes and food.
2. As she places dishes and food on the floor or a table, sit with her and begin pretend play.
3. Imitate her action with the dishes and food. If she stirs with a spoon and cup, you stir with similar utensils. Remember to describe what she is doing.

Parallel Talk — Example: "You are stirring with the spoon in the cup."

4. Let her label the items first. Then give her the names for the objects that she doesn't know. Example: "You are using a fork to eat."
5. Let her pretend to feed you if she wishes.
6. Stretch her language.

Stretch Talk — Example: Child: "Mom eat."
Parent: "Mom is eating cake."

Parent response: How did this work for you? Easy because he really liked it

What did baby like to do? like to play with play food

How did baby feel?

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APPENDIX C.2

Tiarra

10-21-92

Notes from . . . Parents As Teachers

— She puts everything in the toilet or the tub— from a whole roll of toilet tissue to a stuffed animal

— She's still jabbering

— She repeats words

— She shakes her head for yes and shrugs her shoulders for "I don't know".

— She says what's that, who's that and park, and bus

— She goes behind me and dirties up. She likes sweeping and mopping and cleaning the table

— She took her first shower with me and she had fun.

— She pulls her pants down and sits on the big potty.

Ferguson-Florissant School District

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APPENDIX C.3

APPENDIX C

Boxes for Babes Project
Parents as Teachers
Parent Evaluation

Child's Name _____ ***Birthdate*** _____ ***Date*** _____

1. What part of being in the Boxes for Babes project do you like the best?

2. Has Boxes for Babes made a difference in the way you parent?
How?

3. Has the Boxes for Babes made a difference your response to you child's attempts to speak?

4. What activities in the boxes did your child (did you) enjoy the most?

5. What suggestions do you have to improve this project? What else would you have liked to have happened during Boxes for Babes visits?

APPENDIX D

GOMPERS MENTORING PROJECT
STUDENT QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS/WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

GRADE _____ MALE _____ FEMALE _____

1. WHAT TYPES OF THINGS DOES THE MENTOR DO IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

2. WHY DOES THIS PERSON COME INTO YOUR CLASS EACH WEEK?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

3. WHAT DO YOU THINK HIS GOALS ARE FOR YOU?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

4. CAN YOU THINK OF SOMETHING YOU DID FOR YOURSELF OR SOMEONE ELSE THAT YOU DID BECAUSE OF WHAT YOUR MENTOR TALKED ABOUT IN CLASS?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE THAT MIGHT IMPROVE THE MENTORING PROGRAM?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. As a result of the mentor's speaking with your class, do you think you do things differently? Circle answer that is right for you.

do homework	less	same	more
attend school	less	same	more
help others	less	same	more
feel self respect/pride	less	same	more
have career goals	less	same	more
improved behavior	less	same	more
get better grades	less	same	more

THANK YOU ! ! !

GOMPERS MENTORS PROJECT
FACULTY QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS/WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

GRADE TAUGHT _____ MALE _____ FEMALE _____

1. WHAT TYPES OF THINGS DOES THE MENTOR DO IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

2. WHY DOES THIS PERSON COME INTO YOUR CLASS EACH WEEK?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

3. WHAT DO YOU THINK HIS GOALS ARE FOR THE STUDENTS?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

4. CAN YOU THINK OF SOMETHING YOU DID BECAUSE OF WHAT THE CLASS MENTOR TALKED ABOUT IN CLASS?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE THAT MIGHT IMPROVE THE MENTORING PROGRAM?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. As a result of the mentor's speaking with your class, do you think the students do things differently? Circle the answer that represents the classes' behavior overall.

Do they:

do homework	less	same	more
attend school	less	same	more
help others	less	same	more
feel self respect/pride	less	same	more
have career goals	less	same	more
improved behavior	less	same	more
get better grades	less	same	more

THANK YOU ! ! !

SURVEY INTERVIEW FORM

GOMPERS' FINE ARTS MENTORING PROGRAM
APRIL 1994

1. Are you a Student _____ Parent _____ Mentor _____ Teacher _____ and/or
other _____.

2. What is your role in the Mentoring Program?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

3. Tell how you got started and what the beginning days in the program were like for you?
What were your ups and downs?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

4. Where have you turned for help when you needed it?

_____
_____

_____
_____

5. What kind of information has proved most useful in your involvement?

6. What has been the most important event in the life of the Mentoring Program for you?

7. Why was this event important to you?

8. From your perspective what makes participation in the Mentoring Program challenging and worthwhile?

9. What if anything has changed about your school as a result of the Mentoring Program?